Volume XXIV, Issue No. 259 **WEDNESDAY** DECEMBER 31, 2014 www.saipantribune.com 75¢

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PERSONS OF THE YEAR

Geri Willis and Nola Hix

By THOMAS MANGLONA II
CORRESPONDENT

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has over 500 reservists and active service members stationed in areas across the globe. These soldiers who fight for our freedom and march beyond the boundaries of our nation to ensure domestic tranquility often witness the darkest parts of humanity on the battlefield.

Everyday heroes supporting our troops

The emotional struggle and mental strain that a soldier experiences can be hard to overcome. However, Geri Willis and Nola Hix of the CNMI Operation Homefront help alleviate the stress and make the holiday season a thousand miles away from home more jubilant by spearheading a drive

See GERI on Page 4

Operation Homefront founder Gerri Willis, left, and coordinator Nola Hix, right, have united the community every year in sending hundreds of care packages to those fighting for our freedom overseas during the holiday season.
THOMAS A. MANGLONA II

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Local

The top local stories of 2014

This rundown of the year's top local stories was compiled by the editorial team here at *Saipan Tribune* to give our readers a capsule view of which stories and personalities dominated the year's front pages, which issues captivated the public's attention, and how the whole drama played out in the news cycle.

1 Single-largest development deal in CNMI history'

You may be for or against it, but the $7.1-billion integrated casino development agreement that the CNMI government forged with Best Sunshine International Ltd. in August is undoubtedly the single-largest development deal in CNMI history.

The multi-billion dollar casino agreement paves the way for the construction of 4,000 hotel guest rooms, 17,000 square meters of total gaming floor area, a $100-million themed entertainment facility, 600-seat theater, 10,000-square-meter retail area, and over 20 F&B outlets. But more than the dimensions of the planned resort, in the short term the much-debated casino deal allowed the government to finally pay the retirees' deferred 25-percent pension since last year, and the payment of interest on defined benefit plan members' withdrawn contributions. The deal also gave relief to long-suffering power consumers of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. in the form of $10 million worth of utility vouchers.

The construction of 4,000-room hotel will also equate to job growth, as Best Sunshine said that they would need as much as 9,000 workers with most of them to be recruited from the local pool of workers.

2 Inos-Torres victory

Republican standard-bearer Gov. Eloy S. Inos and Ralph DLG Torres topped the gubernatorial general elections and subsequently emerged victorious over independent Heinz Hofschneider-Ray N. Yumul during the runoff race.

The Commonwealth Election Commission board certified the election results of the Nov. 21 gubernatorial runoff, declaring Inos-Torres the winner over Hofschneider-Yumul with a big 1,744 margin.

During the Nov. 4 four-way gubernatorial elections, Inos-Torres received a total of 6,342 votes, while the Hofschneider-Yumul team came second with a total of 4,501.

The Inos-Torres team got 46.6 percent of the total votes cast, just about 4 percentage points less than the required 50 percent-plus-one rule that would have resulted in their tandem being declared the outright winner, preventing a runoff election.

The Inos-Torres' 1,841 margin over Hofschneider-Yumul paved the way for the second runoff race in the CNMI last Nov. 21.

At the runoff race, Inos-Torres still came strong by garnering a total of 6,877 votes, while Hofschneider-Yumul obtained 5,133, according to CEC official results.

The inauguration of Inos and Torres as governor and lieutenant governor respectively will be on Jan. 15.

The then-lieutenant governor Inos became governor when Benigno R. Fitial resigned as governor in Feb. 2013.

3 A bloody year

The year 2014 saw two double homicides and a young police officer fatally shooting his former girlfriend with his service firearm and then himself.

The early part of the year was greeted with a double homicide case when the bodies of a Chinese couple, Guo Huang Xu and Qing Xiu Zheng, were found completely charred in their bedroom in As Gonno on Feb. 23.

An autopsy determined that the couple, both farmers, died due to asphyxiation from soot and carbon monoxide inhalation as a result of the fire. Arson investigators classified the case as a double homicide as the fire was intentional.

The family put up a $5,000 cash reward to anyone who can provide information leading to the arrest of the person or persons behind the killing. As of yesterday, no one has been arrested yet. Family mem-

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From Page 2

bers believe that robbery was the motive, but they refused to elaborate.

On Nov. 2, another double homicide involving two Chinese male farmers stunned the community and triggered Chinese business persons and farmers to join forces by holding peaceful protests for justice.

Hai Ren Li, 51, and Cheng You Li, 47, were reported missing on Nov. 21. Their bodies were dumped at the old airport runway in Koblerville two days later. Investigators again classified the case as double homicide as visible signs of foul play were found. Part of a large group of concerned members of the Chinese community that conducted a search found the farmers' bodies.

The searchers also spotted Hai Ren Li's Toyota Tacoma that was abandoned under some tangan-tangan trees a few meters on the side of Magisa Drive in As Gonno. Magisa Drive is located about 50 meters away where the victims' bodies were dumped.

The murder caused over 150 Chinese farmers and owners of various businesses to come out in a long vehicular convoy to express their anger and frustration over the killing and other unsolved homicides involving Chinese nationals on Saipan.

Some protestors urged police and the FBI to look into the possible involvement of six "local extortionists" in the two double homicides.

Friends of the victims put up a $10,000 cash reward for any information leading to an arrest. As of yesterday, no one was arrested yet.

With less than a week before the Christmas celebration or two weeks before the year ends, the community was stunned when a shooting incident happened in Garapan in the morning of Dec. 19.

Police Officer 1 Christopher S. Santos reportedly fatally shot his former girlfriend, Joana Vitug, before shooting himself inside the latter's office at Mailman and Kara law offices.

Santos and Vitug have a child. Vitug has three other children.

4 The historic Buckingham trial

The historic bench trial of former attorney general Edward T. Buckingham was held in February before Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo. Buckingham was the first AG in CNMI history to stand trial on criminal charges.

Govendo found Buckingham guilty of all public corruption charges except one and sentenced him to 3.5 years in prison, all suspended.

In imposing a no-prison term sentence, Govendo said he believes that jail is not appropriate considering that, among other things, the 65-year-old Buckingham is not a typical criminal that stole or embezzled a huge amount of money or committed sexual abuse or violent crimes.

Govendo ordered Buckingham to pay a $14,000 fine and placed him on unsupervised probation for 3.5 years.

The Office of the Public Auditor originally filed 12 criminal charges against the former AG in connection with violation of election laws and illegal award of a sole-source contract, among others.

Govendo dismissed four charges, including those pertaining to the contract issue.

5 Fitial returns to face charges

Former governor Benigno R. Fitial returned to the CNMI from the Philippines last April 26 to face the criminal charges related to shielding former attorney general Edward T. Buckingham from being served with penal summons. He resigned as governor in February 2013. He and his wife then left the CNMI.

Upon Fitial's counsel Stephen Nutting's request last March 17, Judge Wiseman quashed the arrest warrant he issued against Fitial and ordered the former governor to voluntarily appear in court on April 30.

On April 30, Fitial, 68, came with a cane aided by his wife, Josie, before Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman for his initial appearance.

A day later, the Office of the Public Auditor filed a complaint charging Fitial with 10 various criminal charges. OPA later amended the information to include three more charges.

The charges are related to the unauthorized release of a federal inmate, award of a sole-source American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contract, shielding of Buckingham from being served with penal summons, and the execution of a power purchase agreement contract related to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Fitial pleaded not guilty.

Last November, Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman dismissed the criminal charges against Fitial.

Wiseman ruled that OPA lacks authority to initiate criminal action against Fitial, now a private citizen, and that the Attorney General retains prosecutorial authority over such an action when the defendant is not currently in office.

Wiseman dismissed the case without prejudice, meaning the case can be re-filed in the future.

OPA moved the court to reconsider Wiseman's ruling. The judge has yet to issue a decision.

6 The trial and conviction of Crisostomo

The jury trial of habitual offender Joseph A. Crisostomo over the kidnapping, rape, killing, and robbing bartender Emerita R. Romero began on April 7. On April 24, the six jurors reached a guilty verdict against the 40-year-old Crisostomo on charges of first-degree murder, kidnapping, sexual assault in the first-degree, and robbery.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho, who presided over the trial and decided the misdemeanor charges, found Crisostomo guilty of assault and battery, and disturbing the peace.

Camacho sentenced Crisostomo to life imprisonment. The defendant is appealing his conviction to the CNMI Supreme Court. His appeal is still pending.

Romero, 37 and a mother of two, was last seen boarding a car near her house in Garapan in the early morning of Feb. 5, 2012. Two days later, FBI agents found her body in a small room at an abandoned La Fiesta Mall in San Roque/As Matuis. Autopsy showed she was beaten and strangled to death with a pair of leggings.

The prosecution called a total of 31 witnesses during the trial. Defense attorney Janet King called only a detective as their witness.

King, however, filed 44 pretrial individual motions. Two Guam lawyers assisted King in the case. The Guam lawyers, however, did not attend the trial.

At the trial, the prosecution played twice the dramatic recording of the 911 call that Romero made in the early morning hours of Feb. 5, 2012.

7 The disappearance of Japanese sisters

Japanese sisters Chinatsu and Natsuki Yamada mysteriously disappeared in Marpi on June 30. They were reported missing after their rental car was recovered at Wing Beach.

On that same day, Chinatsu, 26, and Natsuki, 33, were supposed to fly back to Japan.

A search and rescue team recovered on July 2 the inflatable raft that was believed used by the sisters at Wing Beach. The sisters remained unfound.

Police said based on surveillance footage at Mariana Resort where the sisters stayed, the two left their hotel room on June 29 at 10:17pm.

The following day, at 12:08pm, the car rented by the sisters was recovered at Wing Beach. That afternoon, police found at the beach the clothing and towels believed to belong to the sisters. Inside the towels were the keys to the car, U.S. dollar bills, and articles of clothing. Also found at the beach were rowing paddles and the pump to inflate a raft, police said.

The parents of the missing sisters have visited Saipan for the sixth time since after the incident. The parents are appealing to anyone in the community who has information about what happened to their daughters to come forward.

8 Former Rota senator Ayuyu sentencing

It was last March when U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona slapped a 41-month prison term on former Rota senator Juan M. Ayuyu. Manglona told Ayuyu that although he did not gain financially for his actions, he had brought a significant shame to the Office of the Senate of the Commonwealth.

Ayuyu pleaded guilty to the offense of conspiring to violate the Endangered Species Act and to the offense of conspiring to obstruct an official proceeding.

The former senator has three

Continued on Page 5

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DPS issues safety tips on use of firecrackers, fireworks

The Department of Public Safety issued yesterday safety tips on the use of firecrackers or fireworks for today and tomorrow's New Year's Eve revelry in the CNMI.

DPS Fire Division spokesperson Jocelyn Alvarez urged residents to report people using modified fireworks or modified devices such as cannons as such items are not permitted and are considered illegal.

Alvarez said anyone under 18 years old may not purchase fireworks and that parents or guardians should not allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.

Alvarez said fireworks are not permitted for use in residential areas after 10pm.

Adults, she said, should always supervise fireworks activities.

"Never try to reignite fireworks that have not ignited fully. Never point fireworks toward another person," she said.

Alvarez advised people to never carry fireworks in their pockets or shoot them off in metal or glass containers.

"Any individual under the influence of drugs or alcohol should not use or supervise in the use of fireworks," she added.

Last New Year festivities in the CNMI were peaceful. Police caught only one person driving while intoxicated and no major vehicular accident was reported. No firecracker or fireworks-related injury was reported.

As of press time, almost all fireworks and firecrackers sold at stores were already sold out. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Korean media tout Hell of the Marianas

The Northern Mariana Islands is looking to attract more Koreans to the annual 100K Hell of the Marianas bike race on Saipan with media coverage from this year's event.

Three Korean media outlets are publishing coverage of the Dec. 6 race, which drew 13 competitors from Korea this year, including six prize winners. *Men's Health* magazine, *Luel*, and *Bike Magazine* all covered the event.

"There is the potential for more participation from Korea in the annual Hell of the Marianas, and supporting a FAM tour for Korean media during the event was a win-win situation," said Marianas Visitors Authority marketing director Bruce Bateman. "In addition to spreading the word about the race, they will also feature other visitor attractions around island and share their photo rights with the MVA for promotional purposes."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Competitors in the Hell of the Marianas bike race on Dec. 6, 2014, on Saipan are being featured in *Men's Health, Luel,* and *Bike Magazine* in Korea as part of efforts by the Marianas Visitors Authority to promote the race internationally.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Six racers from Korea won prizes in the 100K Hell of the Marianas bike race on Dec. 6, 2014, on Saipan, a feat covered by three Korean media that attended the event, *Men's Health, Luel*, and *Bike Magazine*.

Accommodations were provided by Fiesta Resort & Spa, dinner was hosted by Hard Rock Café Saipan, and sponsorship for three racers associated with the group was donated by Hell of the Marianas.

While on Saipan the tour group also took an island tour of Banzai Cliff, Suicide Cliff, Bird Island Lookout, Last Command Post, beaches, and T Galleria. ***(MVA)***

Globetrotting 'iWalker' TV show films in NMI

Taiwan's globe-trotting cable TV show "iWalker" filmed on Saipan and Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands on Dec. 11-18, 2014.

The show features various destinations around the world and has 30 million viewers in Taiwan and around the world.

"The 'iWalker' production team expressed amazement at the stunning waters of Grotto where they filmed snorkeling," said Marianas Visitors Authority marketing manager Bruce Bateman. "They also were impressed by the vibrant, clean water and islands they saw while parasailing and flying between Saipan and Tinian."

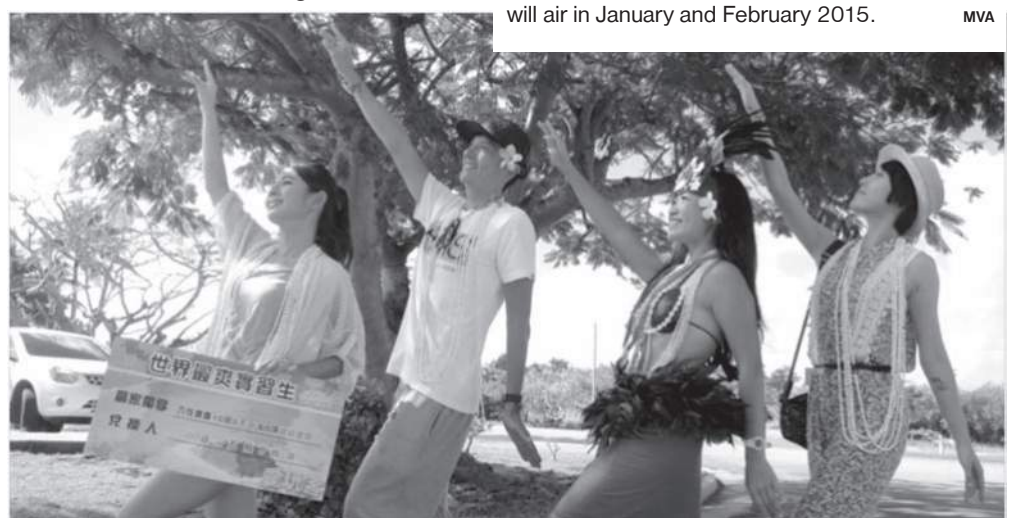
The show will feature banana boat rides, parasailing, Garapan Street Market, Mt. Carmel Cathedral, a bike tour with Marianas Trekking, Marianas Tropical Liqueurs, snorkeling at Grotto, Kanoa Resort Adventure Zone, dinner cruise aboard the Stars & Stripes, Suicide Cliff, Banzai Cliff, Bird Island Lookout, Last Command Post, scenic Beach Rd., and downtown Garapan night life.

Features on Tinian to be showcased including House of Taga, Tinian Blowhole, Chulu Beach, Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino, fishing, snorkeling, a discovery flight, and a buggy ride.

Additional filming was conducted at Pacific Islands Club Saipan and 360 Revolving Restaurant.

The first episode will air on Jan. 12, 2015, in Taiwan and China. Sanlih Entertainment Television Co. will air the show internationally in January and February 2015. ***(MVA)***

Taiwan's "iWalker" cable TV show filmed on Saipan and Tinian in December 2014 for an episode that will air in January and February 2015. MVA



GERI

From Page 1

every year to send care packages to them.

Cans of Spam and tuna, bags of rice crackers, bowls of dry ramen noodles, and cherished island souvenirs lift the spirits of the soldiers, because of the work of these two community crusaders.

Geri Willis, whose father served as a member of the Air Force in World War II, founded the organization seven years ago. Since then, hundreds of care packages have been sent to soldiers overseas with the collaboration of schools, businesses, and companies on island.

"I wanted to do something for the soldiers because I have been doing a lot of work with them," she said. "I thought this is the best way to help them out, especially during the holidays."

"The soldiers are always dear to my heart," Willis said, tears streaking her face. "The hope of this entire organization is that all of them will come home. That is the real hope."

Willis has been involved in education all her life and arrived on Saipan in 2001 as a professor at the Northern Marianas College. She was then named as the U.S Department of Defense Troops-To-Teachers coordinator for the CNMI and Guam.

In April 2007 she received Senate Resolution 15-38 and House Resolution 15-102 recognizing her dedication, commitment and invaluable contributions to the educational system and community.

Willis developed and wrote grants totaling up to over$2 million that funded the Public School System's AmeriCorps tutoring program from 2006 to 2012. She also served as the Director for the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, developed the Office of Institutional Affairs and wrote its first manual.

Before arriving on island, Willis wrote stories of war zones in the Middle East as a freelance journalist, standing alongside the very people she fervently admires and would soon assist through her organization.

She was awarded a medallion of Highest Commendation for Excellence to servicemen from the Thunderbolt Brigade out of Camp Basra, Iraq. Willis remains active on island while on the Salvation Army's board of directors.

Humble beginnings

Operation Homefront's first care package was put together in a small room at the Saipan Army Reserve Center and the number of recipients and volunteers have grown substantially since then. The organization earned the distinction of being the first of its kind in Micronesia in 2007.

A total of 338 packages were sent to soldiers last November, an increase from the 280 packages sent to service members in 2013.

Both Hix and Willis attribute much of the group's success to the several schools and sponsors who contribute food and monetary donations.

"The entire community has really made the program what it is every year. It has not been any one individual."

The efforts of Willis and Hix have touched the hearts of soldiers in the deepest parts of the battleground throughout the globe.

Willis said the operation continues to receive calls from around the world from soldiers not from the CNMI requesting that a care package be sent to them.

"In the end this is something we want to do for our soldiers. After all the things they have done for us, this is just something small that we can do for them."

Hix, who is also a board member of the American Red Cross, assumed her position as coordinator in 2009, a few months after volunteering at a previous packaging event.

"I remember going to the troop store for one of the packaging sessions. It was a small place and a ton of people came. It took us five hours to complete the entire thing," she said in an interview with *Saipan Tribune*. "After going throughout the years and events, she [Willis] eventually asked me to jump on board."

Hix, the sponsorship chairwoman for the March Against Cancer, gladly joined the operation and was instrumental in recruiting major sponsors like the Hyatt Regency and Xerox Corporation along with several private and public schools on island to take part in the program.

The number of volunteers who package the goods has grown exponentially because of Hix's involvement. The group now welcomes over a hundred student volunteers during their annual packaging day.

"What used to take us five hours to do now takes us about one hour," she said. "We also send the packages out around Thanksgiving so that the soldiers receive it before the holidays."

For Hix, the organization's mission is personal. "There are some soldiers who have not received a care package from home. So every year we give them something to look forward to," she said.

The result of Operation Homefront's efforts are visible in the island community as military families receive more support.

One soldier who returned to the islands visited an elementary student who sent him a letter and a care package, to thank her for keeping him in her thoughts and prayers.

"The feedback has been so positive from both the soldiers and families. We want to provide some comfort and hope that they are safe," Hix said. "We can't pull them out of the battle zones, but we can give them hope."

Another CNMI soldier requested for a care package after reading an online article about the organization, while he was in a submarine in the Mediterranean Ocean.

U.S Army Specialist Kevin Atalig was sent a care package as well and said he was wasn't expecting any gifts for the holidays, but was elated to receive the package.

He added, "It is nice to receive all the goodies and have a taste of something I eat at home. I thank the people behind Operation Homefront for supporting troops like me."

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criminal cases—the fruit bat case, obstruction of justice case, and cell phone possession case. He pleaded guilty to two charges.

In sentencing Ayuyu, Manglona said one month prior to defendant's first conduct (fruit bat case) that happened on Oct. 17, 2010, three Rota residents were indicted in the same court for poaching on a breeding colony of threatened Mariana fruit bats.

The three are Ayuyu's own constituents, said Manglona, referring to Albert Taitano, Adrian Mendiola, and David Santos.

The judge said apparently, Ayuyu, whether he was a senator or not at the time, was not deterred with the indictment of the three.

Ayuyu admitted in the plea deal that he asked Ryan Manglona to lie because he wanted to influence, obstruct, and impede the grand jury from returning an indictment against him for the seizure of the federally protected fruit bats.

On July 22, 2013, Ayuyu pleaded guilty to two charges relating to the smuggling of endangered fruit bats from Rota to Saipan. On Sept. 30, 2013, Ayuyu (Ind-Rota) resigned as a member of the 18th Senate.

9 CHC gets more breathing room.

Early this month the Commonwealth Health Center was provided an extension of its Medicare provider agreement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services up to April 2015. Despite the extension, deficiencies were found but CMS also noted the improvements that CHC has done to addressing the deficiencies found. CHCC had already submitted its corrective action plan and is now awaiting approval.

10 Swift passage of 2015 budget

With already one partial shutdown because of the CNMI government not enacting a budget law before the constitutionally mandated Oct. 1 deadline, this year's quick passage of a $134.33-million spending law for fiscal year 2015 was more the exception than the rule. The Sept. 17 signing of the appropriations bill by Gov. Eloy S. Inos came a couple of weeks before the deadline. It included the salaries of 2,778 public officials and employees and funding for public services such as education, health, safety and pension obligations. But the governor raised some concerns on salary and education funding provisions that need further actions. The budget law also sets aside $338,751 to pay back members of the government employees' credit union who do not have outstanding loans. In signing the appropriations bill, Inos urged everyone to continue pursuing new revenue-generating measures to avoid a catastrophic fiscal situation and maintain sustainability.

11 Military designs on Pagan rankles CNMI

The U.S. Department of Defense's plan to expand military activities on Pagan is being opposed by the CNMI. The local legislature, for one, said the wholesale militarization planned for Pagan would permanently foil any meaningful chance for resettlement and result in collateral damage. The U.S. Air Force's designs in using the Francisco C. Ada International Airport as an alternative airfield has also rankled the community, foremost of which is the Saipan Chamber of Commerce which said this would negatively affect the islands' burgeoning tourism industry. It argues that Tinian is a better divert airbase since two-thirds of the island is already being leased by the military.

12 Saipan mayor passes away while in office.

This year the CNMI experienced grief over the loss of Mayor Donald Glenn Flores on June 2, 2014. As people would remember and describe Flores, he was a loving and caring person to be around with. After his passing, now-Mayor Marian DLG Tudela took the helm of the office, becoming the first ever female mayor in CNMI history.

13 $10 million gift from Best Sunshine.

CNMI residents experienced a gracious Christmas gift from Best Sunshine early this year that started out as a promise of $10 million going to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., which allowed CUC to distribute utility vouchers to every CNMI residential account in the amount of $635.71 early in October. This allowed residents to either avail of the voucher or simply leave it alone.

14 *Paul Russ* runs aground

The 526-foot long, 16,000-ton cargo ship *Paul Russ* ran aground on the reef across Micro Beach on the morning of Sept. 9. With worsening weather, and to avoid a breach of its hull, the cargo ship was successfully pulled out two nights later on the evening of Sept. 11. The Port of Saipan was forced to close when unexploded ordnance was discovered near the ship on the second day of its grounding on Sept. 10. A total of 400,000 gallons of fuel oil remained on board during the ship's grounding. Local and federal agencies as well the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard and the vessel's representatives pooled together their efforts in surveying and removing the grounded ship. No lives were lost, or injuries reported during the episode. A month later, coral remediation efforts were reported to be still underway, and to this day the cause of the grounding has not been provided.

15 NMC continues 'full speed ahead'

Its show-cause status lifted, full accreditation reaffirmed, the college moves up to senior commission, and launches a new four-degree, the Northern Marianas College broke through an era of sanctions and shaky accreditation status…and then some more this year. In February, the Accrediting Commission on Community Junior Colleges lifted a show-cause order imposed in 2013, and granted the college the commission's highest level of reaffirmation. A jubilant crowd packed the college's D-1 building during the announcement of the achievement, and featured such dignitaries like Gov. Eloy Inos. The college continued "Full Speed Ahead" in July when they gained six-year accreditation under the WASC Senior College and University Commission, moving "up one level" and allowing the college to expand its offering of four-year degree programs. This fall semester, a bachelor's degree in business management was launched, joining the college's degree in education as the only four-year degrees offered in the CNMI.

16 Cape Air Blues

Cape Air/United drew the ire of traveling public this year with swaths of cancelled flights during the months of March, July, and August, largely due to "technical issues." A petition circled in June gained a couple hundred signatures calling for federal and local agencies to investigate Cape Air's quality, reliability, and safety of its services, as well as the pricing of their tickets. Cape Air's vice president Andrew Bonney led an "apology tour" of sorts, clarifying the problems Cape Air faces with only two airplanes—one operational and the other a spare—running high-use schedules between Guam and the CNMI, at a Chamber of Commerce meeting in October. Right now, Cape Air is the sole carrier flying between the CNMI and Guam, but Star Marianas Air, an inter-island airlines based on Tinian, is currently pushing to gain access to the Guam airport, though this has been slow going.

17 Honest Profit breaks ground, ACG eyes next year

Hong Kong-based Honest Profit International Ltd. broke ground on its $130-million Saipan Resort Hotel last September. The 300-room hotel is being built in 40,00 square meters of public land in San Antonio.

Meanwhile, Macau-based Alter City Group is planning to start Phase 1 of its $360-million, 500-room golf resort in Puntan Diablo, Tinian as early as next year if permitting agencies expedite their applications.

Later phases will include an 18-hole golf course over 75 hectares of land. However, the company said the golf course can't go ahead until a dumpsite is relocated from the proposed land.

18 Controversial PPA declared invalid

The past year saw the Superior Court rule as invalid the $190-million power purchase agreement entered into by the CNMI government with controversial Saipan Development LLC. The court found that then-governor Benigno C. Fitial had no authority to suspend the procurement regulations of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and the deal with the company was non-binding from the beginning.

The alleged secret signing of the no-bid, 25-year $190-million deal was one of the issues that led to the filing of impeachment charges against Fitial, who subsequently resigned as governor.

As 2015 approaches, give a moment of thought to the
achievements as well as the failures of 2014 so that you know
what the right path for you would be.
2015
Happy New Year!
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Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Dela Cruz criticizes Defense's planned use for Tinian lands

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Tinian Mayor Ramon M. Dela Cruz has made his opposition clear to the U.S. Department of Defense's military buildup plans, unless Tinian is allowed to progress with its economic development.

In a letter to Gov. Eloy S. Inos on Monday, Dela Cruz noted that there is a still a pending release of the Commonwealth Joint Military Training plan draft Environmental Impact Study by Marine Forces Pacific or MarForPac that details how they want to maximize the use of Tinian leased lands.

Dela Cruz told Inos that Tinian agrees that DoD has the right to develop their Tinian leased lands within the parameters of the Covenant and the original lease agreement and that the economic development of Tinian must be allowed to progress unimpeded by any proposed military development of their leased lands.

"Particularly any plan that might interfere with Tinian's air and sea space, both of which are critical to this community's economic development," Dela Cruz said.

He said that Tinian also opposes the creation of a "High Impact Area" for heavy artillery or helicopter rocket attacks on their island.

Shortly after taking office in 2010, Dela Cruz had insisted that the military clean up the old mortar range at Chiget before considering another range. After five years, Dela Cruz claims that they have not been able to clean it up.

According to him, the Chiget mortar range is now by definition a "Dudded Impact Area"--an area used to contain non-explosive military munitions that may be temporarily used to contain non-sensitive, high explosive, and military munitions.

"The CNMI should sue DoD for violating the parameters of their lease agreement," Dela Cruz said.

He said that if MarForPac's plan is approved with its proposed artillery range, it would ultimately result in the destruction of historic sites such as North Broadway, the Hinode Shine and the American Memorial Shrine that was built by U.S Navy Seabees in memory of all who served on Tinian during World War II.

Dela Cruz recommended to Inos that the CNMI Legislature create a "sufficiently funded independent military development commission" with high hopes of cooperation from the Governor's Office to deal with the seriousness of the military buildup plans.

Tinian Dynasty needs to stay

Dela Cruz also finds it hard to believe the recent decision by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to issue a blanket denial for Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino employee contracts, even when the new owner has done everything to rectify mistakes made by the past owners, is not related to the militarization of the NMI.

"This decision was made by Washington, D.C by federal officials amongst each other. They had to recognize that such a decision would not only gut the economy of Tinian and throw hundreds of Americans out of work," Dela Cruz said.

He believes this could repeat the fall of the garment industry and that Tinian Dynasty is of the utmost importance for Tinian's future economic development.

"Obviously, the loss of CNMI revenues from the closure of Dynasty will far outweigh any potential long term financial benefit the CNMI might hope to receive from the proposed military training activities on Tinian, which tells us there is very little concern in Washington, D.C over the condition of the CNMI economy," he said.

Bodies found in Indonesian waters where plane disappeared

PANGKALAN BUN, Indonesia (AP)—Six bloated bodies and debris seen floating in Indonesian waters Tuesday painfully ended the mystery of AirAsia Flight 8501, which crashed into the Java Sea with 162 people aboard and was lost to searchers for more than two days.

The bodies were found about 160 kilometers (100 miles) from land and 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the plane's last known coordinates. The plane vanished Sunday on its way from Surabaya, Indonesia to Singapore after encountering storm clouds.

The six bodies were recovered, swollen but intact, and taken to an Indonesian navy ship, First Adm. Sigit Setiayanta, the Naval Aviation Center commander at the Surabaya air force base, told reporters. The corpses did not have life jackets on.

Search and rescue teams were lowered on ropes from a hovering helicopter to retrieve the corpses, their efforts hindered by 2-meter-high (6-foot) waves and strong winds, National Search and Rescue Director SB Supriyadi told The Associated Press.

The discovery came after several pieces of red, white and black debris were spotted in the Java Sea near Borneo island. AirAsia planes are red and white.

Supriyadi said that from an aircraft above, he said he saw what appeared to be a life jacket and an emergency exit door. More wreckage could be seen beneath the water.

Student essay contest on overseas Filipinos launched

For the education and increased awareness of Filipino students regarding the roles and importance of overseas Filipinos in the future of the Philippines, Dr. Celia Lamkin, chairperson of the US Pinoys for Good Governance-Marianas chapter, has launched an essay contest for high school and college students.

In 2012, the Commission on Overseas Filipinos, a government agency under the Office of the President of the Philippines, which is headed by Secretary Imelda M. Nicolas, estimated that approximately 10.5 million Filipinos work or reside abroad.

The contest is open to all Filipino students or those of Filipino descent in the Philippines or overseas, from 10 to 25 years old who are enrolled in high school and college.

Lamkin

Submissions will be accepted from Dec. 31, 2014, to Feb. 1, 2015. Entries should be submitted by email only at overseasfilipinosessay@yahoo.com.

The theme of the essay is "The overseas Filipinos and their impact on the Philippines."

The essay should focus on:

1 The contributions of overseas Filipinos to the economy of the Philippines; the importance of the participation of overseas Filipinos in the Philippine elections.

2 What are the social risks that the children and families of overseas Filipinos face due to long years of separation or long distance relationships?

3 Why are the overseas Filipinos called to be the "new heroes" of the Philippines? Please describe the traits of overseas Filipinos that make them unique as global immigrants.

The essay must be original. It must not be previously published in print or online nor in any visual and/or auditory recording. It must be in English and must not be more than 1,500 typed words and should be in MS Word format.

Prize ranges from 25,000 to 3,000 pesos ($500 to $60). The school/college/university of the first prize winning essay says will receive 10,000 pesos ($220) each.

Every student entry must contain the confirmation of the school principal, college/university dean or president that the essay is written by and originated from the student. Signature of the school principal, college or university president or dean, address, email address and telephone number are required to authenticate the student entry.

Only one entry per person will be accepted. The entry form is available at www.uspgg.org or it can be requested by email at celialamkin@yahoo.com. A parental consent, authorization and liability waiver form is required for minor students. Adult students, for their part, must submit a student consent, authorization and liability waiver form.

A panel of judges, selected by the US Pinoys for Good Governance Ad Hoc Committee for Essay Contest on Overseas Filipinos, will make the final decision.

The awards ceremony will be held during the Third Global Summit of Filipinos in the Diaspora on Feb. 25-27, 2015, at Manila Hotel in Manila, Philippines, where approximately 600 participants from different countries are expected to attend.

Attorney Loida Nicolas Lewis, national chairperson of US Pinoys for Good Governance, says, «It is good to listen to what the youth feel about Filipinos overseas because they themselves may be children of Filipinos who went abroad to seek financial resources to give their family a better future.»

US Pinoys for Good Governance, headed by national chairwoman attorney Loida Nicolas Lewis, president attorney Rodel Rodis and legal counsel/spokesman attorney Ted Laguatan, is a nonprofit organization based in New York, whose mission is a better life for Filipinos everywhere and a better Philippines.

For more information, email Dr. Celia Lamkin at celialamkin@yahoo.com or Norman Silvestre at norman.silvestre@yahoo.com.ph.

For more information on the USP4GG, visit www.uspgg.org.

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NMC to highlight Credit for Prior Learning at info session

The Northern Marianas College will be highlighting its new Credit for Prior Learning Program at next week's Jan. 8, 2015, Info Session. Anyone interested in learning more about this program is invited to attend.

Credit for Prior Learning is a way that college credit is awarded for knowledge gained through training, employment, and life-experiences, as self-assessed and documented in a portfolio.

The portfolio will be developed in the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Development course (BE200), which is a 3-credit course being offered this spring semester at NMC. The course will help students develop a portfolio that includes a written analysis of what they learned and how they applied this knowledge in the workplace at a level that merits college credit consideration.

The Portfolio Development course is a requirement in the Credit for Prior Learning process and will examine written narratives, verifiable documents, certificates of training, certifications and licenses, proficiency exams, college transcripts, and military and professional training. Other verifiable evidence of knowledge may be considered.

The Info Session will also feature topics such as the college's new bachelor's degree in Business Management, benefits of a higher education, financial aid opportunities, and other initiatives.

The information session, which is open to all prospective students and community members, will be on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015, from 5pm to 6pm in Room D-1 at the college's As Terlaje campus.

For more information about the information session and/or applying to NMC, contact the Office of Admissions & Records at (670) 237-6770, email oar@marianas.edu or visit www.marianas.edu. ***(PR)***

OVR relaunches its website

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council, has relaunched its website. The website contains the revised application forms for printing, the FY 2015 State Plan, updates on the Re-Authorization of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014), as well as links to its partner agencies.

The public can access the numerous updates at www.ovrgov.net . ***(PR)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
2nd floor-Oleai Joeten Commercial Center
Saipan, MP 96950

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
DPW/SWM15-RFP-001

PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES FOR REMOVAL, PACKAGING, CONTAINMENT, AND SHIPPING OF HAZARDOUS WASTE MATERIALS COLLECTED AT THE LOWER BASE TRANSFER STATION

Governor Eloy S. Inos and Lt. Governor Jude Hofschneider, through the Secretary of Public Works, are soliciting sealed proposals from qualified companies or individuals to provide Procurement of Services for removal, packaging, containment, and shipping of hazardous waste materials collected at the Lower Base Transfer Station (LBRTS), Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This procurement is made in accordance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, dated May 24, 2001. Proposal procedures shall be in full compliance with **§70-30.3-210** (competitive sealed proposals) of the Procurement Regulations.

The Scope of Services will be available on or after **December 17, 2014** at the Solid Waste Management Division office, Lower Base Transfer Station, Saipan, MP 96950. A mandatory Pre-proposal Conference is scheduled for 9:30 a.m., local time, at the Solid Waste Management Division office, Lower Base Transfer Station **January 07, 2015**. Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to Mr. Enrique Dela Cruz, Director of Solid Waste Management Division, Lower Base Transfer Station, Saipan, or fax to (670) 322-2762 no later than 4:00 p.m. local time January 14, 2015.

Proposals must be sealed and marked **"DPW/SWM15-RFP-001."** For proposers within the CNMI, one original and five (5) copies of sealed proposal must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, MP 96950 no later than 10:00 a.m., local time, January 26, 2015.

Proposers located outside of the CNMI may obtain additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their proposal by submitting a **Notice of Intent to Propose**. Notices of Intent to submit proposals must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than 10:00 a.m., local time, **January 26, 2015**, and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or via email to procurement@pticom.com. For proposers located outside the CNMI, one original and five (5) copies of sealed proposals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **January 26, 2015** and must be received no later **February 04, 2015**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of proposal.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers in accordance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion and revision of proposals and such revisions may be permitted after submission and prior award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offer. In conducting discussions, there shall be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers. All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the proposer awarded a contract.

The firm selected will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations NMIAC Section **70-30.3-245** and must be able to obtain a CNMI Business License prior to contract award.

Procurement of these services is made in accordance with NMIAC Section **70-30.3-210** of the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Proposals for the project will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Operation Plan: 40%
2. Past Experience on Similar Projects: 40%
3. Professional Qualifications: 10%
4. Financial Proposal: 10%

Technical merit is more important than price and the Government reserves the right to award to other than the lowest proposer.

Award shall be made to the responsible proposer whose proposal is determined in writing to be most advantageous to the government taking into consideration price and the evaluation factors set forth in this request for proposal. No other factors or criteria shall be used in the evaluation.

The government reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any imperfection in a proposal if in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All proposals shall become the property of the CNMI government.

/s/MARTIN C. SABLAN
Secretary of Public Works

/s/HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director of Procurement and Supply

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
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Tel.: (670) 664-8300 • Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.crm.gov.mp

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing regarding Coastal Permit Application No. SMS-2014-X-054 submitted by the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation for the exploratory drilling of an existing CUC well (GR-6) for the purpose of collecting scientific data for evaluation and assessment regarding the potential for utilizing geothermal energy on Saipan. The project site is located in Gualo Rai, Saipan.

The public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, January 14, 2015, 6:00 PM at the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality office (2nd floor conference room) located in the GRC Building in Gualo Rai, Saipan.

The public is invited to attend and make oral comments regarding this project. The project file is open for review and comments during business hours from 7:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M. Written comments can be submitted to the DCRM Office located in the GRC Bldg. in Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mail to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, Caller Box 10007 or fax at 664-8315. All written and oral comments received will be made a part of the permit application record, and will be considered in any decision made concerning the proposed project.

Please contact the Division of Coastal Resources Management at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or require further information regarding this project.

/s/Frances A. Castro
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

Another NMC grad passes NCLEX on first attempt

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Yunjiao Bai, who graduated from the Northern Marianas College last May, recently passed the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses on her first attempt.

A nursing graduate of the Northern Marianas College has become one of the latest students to pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses on their first attempt. Yunjiao Bai, who graduated from NMC last May, took the exam in November.

The NCLEX-RN tests an individual's nursing knowledge, skills, and abilities essential to the safe and effective practice of nursing at the entry level. The exam is used by nursing boards in all U.S. states and territories to award nursing licenses.

"We are extremely proud of Yunjiao's accomplishment," said NMC Nursing Department chairperson Rosa M. Tudela. "I have no doubt that she will be an excellent nurse."

"I chose nursing because of Norman Bethune," said Bai. "My grandmother took me to the Medical University in China, where I learned about Norman Bethune and how he helped many Chinese people."

"I told myself that I would work in a field that helps people of all backgrounds," Bai added. "I passed because I studied hard every day."

"I just wanted to thank everyone who believed in me--my mother, my great instructors at NMC, my classmates, and my coworkers at Marianas Medical Center. They are a great support system and they continue to remind me that I can do it," Bai added.

Asked what advice she would give other students who are preparing to take the NCLEX, Bai said, "As a constant reminder for your exam and as a motivation, change your wallpaper on your cellphone to the date and your name with 'RN' beside it. Study hard. A little anxiety doesn't hurt. Like Narae Kang, another NMC grad who passed the NCLEX on her first attempt, advised--have some chocolate before the exam!" ***(NMC)***

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- The role is fundamental to the smooth and businesslike running of the corporate business on a day to day basis
- Responsible for the purchase of materials, plan inventory and ensure operations efficiency
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- Contribute towards the achievement of company's strategic and operational objectives
- Managing all security and other systems ensuring all procedures are complied with, and appropriate risks are assessed
- Conducting and implementing OM & workflow
- To ensure that the business achieves the required licenses and safety standards to comply with national health, fire and safety regulations thus ensuring the safety of the corporate staff and the public
- Perform quality controls and implement/monitor production KPI's, including setting operational goals to meet
- Manage and implement any software necessary for business growth

OPERATIONS ASSISTANT
- Assist in resolving problems on day to day basis in all operational areas
- Ensure that operational activities are executed within allotted budget, timelines and corporate policy
- Responsible for the execution of the regulations development, procedures and operating instructions tailored to the specific need of the business and addresses such functions as logistics and facilities management, range operations, and administrative requirements, etc.
- Responsible for the management of the supply chain, order processing including thorough documentation
- Maintain database of both internal and external needs
- Prepare responses to correspondence containing routine enquiries
- Other duties as assigned

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
- Develop HR strategy to short and long-range policy and operational issues
- Provides effective human resources guidance and support to the business in staffing, compensation & benefit, performance management, employee relations, orientation, policy/procedure interpretation, organizational design and recognition, etc.
- Manage the development and implementation of staffing strategies to ensure effective recruitment, using practices consistent with company policies and legal requirements
- Act as office manager to oversee and direct administrative service in the organization to ensure facility is equipped with supplies
- Create and operate a reporting system that allows for timely flow of data between regions of the organization
- Budgetary responsibilities include ensuring purchases are within assigned budget
- Performs other duties as assigned

HUMAN RESOURCES ASSISTANT
- Provide full support to HR Manager by assisting in managing day to day office admin and HR activities
- Assist in managing policies, procedures and conduct internal employee programs
- Maintain and update employee profiles and job specification for each hiring positions
- Hands on in HR Database Management, Legal Compliance/Code of Conduct, Organization Development/Process Improvement, Performance & Career Management, Recruitment & Selection, etc
- Arrange official appointments and meetings, record minutes and distribute
- Manage the office administration system to ensure overall company efficiency, productivity and cost effectiveness
- Any other HR duties as assigned

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING MANAGER
- Plan, execute, and finalize assigned project according to strict deadlines and within budget. Including acquiring resources and coordinating the efforts of team members and third-party contractors or consultants in order to deliver according to plan
- Setting up accounting system for new hotels and provide directions and support to all hotels in the group
- Responsible for full set of accounting including tax returns and independently oversee the financial daily operation
- Administer and monitor the financial system in order to ensure that the municipal finances are maintained in an accurate and timely manner
- Oversee the accounts payable and accounts receivable systems in order to ensure complete and accurate records of all monies
- Prepare monthly statements and financial reports
- Responsible for forecasting and budgeting
- Maintain fixed asset and depreciation registers on a monthly/quarterly basis
- CPA qualification and 8 years minimum related working experience

ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT
- Managing bank accounts
- Consolidating annual accounting statements
- Preparing tax returns
- Assisting in any form of auditing
- Reconciling balance sheets
- Preparing financial reports
- Assist in other financial reporting functions when needs arise
- Perform other ad hoc tasks

PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER
- Manage public relations department by planning, directing, or coordinating activities designed to create or maintain a favorable public image or raise issue awareness for the company
- Maintain effective working relationships with local and municipal government officials and media representatives
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with clients, government officials, and media representatives and use these relationships to develop new business opportunities
- Write effective press releases, prepare information for media kits and develop and maintain company internet or intranet web pages
- Identify main client groups and audiences, determine the best way to communicate publicity information to them, and develop and implement a communication plan
- Draft speeches for company executives, and arrange interviews and other forms of contact
- Evaluate advertising and promotion programs for compatibility with public relations efforts
- Assign, supervise and review the activities of public relations staff

PUBLIC RELATIONS COORDINATOR
- Engage in promoting or creating an intended public image for the company
- Respond to requests for information from the media
- Write press releases or other media communications for promotion
- Establish or maintain cooperative relationships with representatives of community, consumer, employee, or public interest groups
- Prepare or edit organizational publications, such as employee newsletters or stockholders' reports, for internal or external audiences
- Arrange public appearances, lectures, contests, or exhibits for clients to increase product or service awareness or to promote goodwill
- Perform all other tasks as assigned by management
- Field media inquiries and present proposed responses for management

CLIENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGER
- Correspond with employees and external stakeholders to keep them informed of company developments
- Communicate externally with the media and other interested parties to announce corporate news and discuss organizational changes in a way that attempts to maintain a positive image of the company
- Identify key media opportunities, plan public relations programs, including the preparation of cost budgets
- Present controversy discussions/debates on behalf of the organization to government
- Respond to enquiries from the public, media and other organizations
- Arrange interviews with journalists, prepare and distribute media releases, and liaise with and make statements to the media/public
- Manage the creation and development of print and online advertising, email marketing, web site management and content development, press releases, bylined articles, white papers, corporate videos and any marketing collateral

CLIENT RELATIONSHIP EXECUTIVE
- Assist in developing and execute communications strategy
- Assist in building and maintaining a culture of communications within the business unit and other/external business units
- Assist in implementation of communications projects from conception to completion
- Coordinate with media and event management, provide communication services for external business units
- Track media coverage and provide analysis to the management
- Assist to conduct media materials, reports and proposals in limited time frames

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Thank you, Si Yu'os Ma'ase and Olomwaay for your interest in working with Alter City Group.

Plumeria Golf & Casino Resort
Tinian, CNMI

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Let our hope kindle better days

It's little surprise the holiday season comes at the end of the year. That's when we need it most. After 12 tough months, we have to reboot. And these last 12 months have been brutal in many ways.

The headlines of 2014 hammered us relentlessly, most recently with the ambush killings of two police officers in Brooklyn, N.Y., reminding us of the horrors that can befall us and the horrors we inflict on ourselves.

Malaysia Airlines Flight 370a disappeared over the Indian Ocean, and Russian-backed rebels in Ukraine shot down another Malaysia Airlines jet. Ebola killed thousands in West Africa, and Boko Haram killed thousands in Nigeria. The Islamic State rose, Syria collapsed, the word beheading was heard more often. The deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of police wrenched the nation into a searing conversation about race, power and perception. And most recently, the Taliban killed dozens of students in Pakistan, two years and two days after the slaughter in Newtown. The smallest coffins, indeed, are the heaviest.

The holidays are supposed to be the antidote. We wish each other peace and goodwill, no matter our religion. We seek relief, we reflect, and we pivot toward optimism about the year ahead. But is seeking relief a sign of sanity or a form of blindness? Is optimism naive or an expression of faith that goodness at some point will prevail?

We cannot let dreadful acts consume us. The past year gave us plenty of inspiration, too. A 17-year-old girl from Pakistan won the Nobel Peace Prize, doctors and nurses continued to volunteer to fight Ebola, and the pope spread a powerful message of tolerance and acceptance. Each was its own lesson in courage, and expanded our conception of what could be achieved.

So gather with friends and family. Bask in their warmth and love. Walk the line between remembering the past and yearning for the future. And hope for happier and less unsettling days to come.

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LOOK! I TRADED FOR MAGIC BEANS... FROM HAVANA!!
UHH... MR. PRESIDENT... THOSE ARE RABBIT PELLETS.
90 miles to CUBA
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BARACK and the BEANSTALK

The Year that Was

By JAIME VERGARA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jaime Vergara previously taught at SVES in the CNMI. A peripatetic pedagogue, he last taught in China but makes Honolulu, Shenyang, and Saipan home. He can be reached at pinoypanda2031@aol.com.

Glee came in a 1992 film of Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson who played streetball hustlers in *White Men Can't Jump*. Harrelson's character gave Snipes a run for his money. In professional sports at the time, muscular blacks supplanted the fair-skinned players in the backcourt and the gridiron so it was fitting that the reality was celebrated.

Dumb and Dumber To led the box office the third weekend November, about the time OZ Tony Abbott stuck his foot in his mouth. He threatened to «front shirt» Putin at APEC in Beijing who in turn diplomatically avoided the Down Under PM. A movie review of Jim Carey and Jeff Daniel›s new dumber-dom said: «It makes a strange sort of sense that a movie about impervious stupidity would be impervious to criticism.» Yo, Mr. Abbott!

The PM redeemed himself in Brisbane during the G20 forum of the richest nations in the world while lightweight David Cameron of UK strutted like the sun still does not set on the British Empire but that was understandable from one whose forebears decongested the Isles of penal residents. Putin received the brunt of the leaders› distance due to Ukraine so he was smart enough to skip town as soon as the formal agenda was over.

It›s a white man colleague in Houston, an 80-year-old former Gulf Oil VP Ben Ball who flings his body into the «barbwires of history» to make sure the tar sands of Alberta do not make it to the Gulf of Mexico through the Keystone XL pipeline! John Boehner of the U.S. House of Representatives already rattled the chains on the White House, and the Senate almost got enough votes to pass the pipeline authorization bill before the end of the year. Sadly, I am too lucid enough to know that corporate designs will prevail!

The black guys are not getting any breaks. Since Obama›s ascendancy over Hillary in a Democratic primary, and his election to the WH vs Sen. John McCain of Arizona, I thought my faith in «We the People» was finally vindicated. That BHO would do a repeat performance vs the Romney-Ryan GOP tandem was short of miraculous. But I did not die smiling and went to heaven! I did see BHO exercise his office›s executive prerogative to forgive two turkeys from the oven!

The advance in human evolution dances one step forward and two steps backward. Anti-black sentiment seethed this year. This skin-deep sentiment of the lightness of being prevailed on white men folks who voted in droves this past mid-term election to register objections to the «socialist» black guy at the White House. In turn, in his end of the year press session, BHO only entertained questions from females, a first, and while I dreamed Hillary and Elizabeth might make an all female presidential ticket, Hillary is now touted for the Supreme Court.

An Irish man once asked if it was fair for his high school graduate son to compete for social benefits against an Asian immigrant with a Ph.D. I didn›t give a hoot about the academic credentials but I did cringe at his assumption that the U.S. favored Caucasians. Orientals where I worked in Dallas ‹70s waited for the droppings after the leavings of the Afros and the Latinos who followed the Anglos. Recently, NYC white cop strangled an Afro, while a black cop killer picked up a Latino and an Oriental! Par for the course! Now, 25 NYC black cops claim insecurity in the company of white cops!

Fear of Afros manifested itself in the bitter aftertaste of the Trayvon Martin shooting, the affirmative action legacy of AG Eric Holder, the Bill Cosby «rape» history, the shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice by a uniformed officer in a playground while he played with a toy gun, and the hulk of Michael Brown›s bulk on Darren Wilson›s personal safety led the grand jury not to indict him in his shooting of the 18-year-old unarmed teenager who may or may not have had his hands up, while the prosecution now claims a witness lied!

Race intruded this year, even with the Chimu (Eloy) vs indigene (Heinz) characterization (go figure) in the recently concluded CNMI election.

Slavic Kievan Rus› unraveled, pitting Moscow against Ukraine, though more political than racial. War in Kashmir between India and Pakistan was hot again. Tibet Buddhists chant peace but Uighurs want sovereignty over petroleum under their desert in Xinjiang, an irritant on Beijing›s hegemony over its 56 nationalities, particularly on one that wields the scimitar›s edge to advance its cause!

In spite of the race war for the unbearable skin lightness of being, it›s the religious drums that beat the loudest. The U.S. demonizes Islamic jihadists but allows Eretz Israel to declare sole Hebraic claim to Palestine. Inter-religious relations started well when the Pope and the Grand Mufti prayed together at the Blue Mosque in Istanbul.

What bridges the Year-that-Was to the Year-to-Come transpires not on the oil politics of IS in the desert but whether the steeple at Main and Elm encourages a holy conflagration on the burnt pages of the Koran.

Inshallah!

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The only real threat to American democracy comes from Americans themselves

By JARED DIAMOND
Los Angeles Times

Jared Diamond is a University of California, Los Angeles geography professor and author of The World Until Yesterday, Collapse *and the Pulitzer Prize-winning* Guns, Germs and Steel. *He wrote this for the* Los Angeles Times.

When I was living in Chile in 1968, my Chilean friends often explained to me proudly that their country was different from other Latin American countries. Chile had a long democratic tradition. Its armed forces had rarely and only briefly meddled in the government, and not at all since 1932. Chile was blessed by a strong cultural identity and a big middle class. It had a diversified economy that combined the world's largest copper mines with manufacturing and agriculture. Chileans were better educated than other Latin Americans, and they based their universities and agriculture on European models. Most of all, they explained, Chileans knew how to govern themselves, as summarized in the saying "We Chileans will never be extremists."

My friends then didn't foresee what would happen five years later. In 1973, after decades of democratic elections, Chile's armed forces overthrew then-President Salvador Allende. The resulting Chilean military government, under General Augusto Pinochet, set modern world records for inventing sadistic sexual tortures too revolting to describe in print. It aimed to exterminate its opponents, "disappearing" and killing thousands of Chileans and driving a hundred thousand more into exile. Pinochet held on to power for 17 years.

In retrospect, there had been abundant signs of trouble brewing in Chile for years before the coup. The country's left, right and center political parties, which drew roughly equal numbers of votes, couldn't agree on how to address Chile's chronic economic and social problems, which kept the Congress in a state of gridlock. Allende had been elected by a narrow 36 percent plurality of voters, and his party coalition controlled neither house of Congress, yet he nevertheless tried to introduce radical political and economic changes.

When the armed forces finally launched their coup and imposed a right-wing dictatorship, it initially received broad support from centrist Chileans, frustrated by years of government gridlock and the declining Chilean economy. Moderate Chileans reasoned that the military dictatorship would be just a brief transitional stage necessary to restore functional democracy to Chile.

Chile is by no means the only place where government gridlock and breakdown of political compromise led ultimately to military dictatorship, the end of democracy and (in some cases) civil war. Examples include Egypt today, Indonesia in 1957, Spain in the late 1930s and Austria just before the Nazi era.

So, should we worry about possible parallels between Chile in 1968 and the U.S. today? On the one hand, it seems unthinkable that the U.S. could drift into dictatorship. Like my Chilean friends then, we Americans are proud of our long democratic tradition and our political stability. We are blessed by a strong national identity and a large middle class. Our highly diversified economy, the biggest in the world, includes resource extraction (especially of oil), manufacturing, agriculture, and technological innovation. Our citizens are highly educated, and we can boast of the world's best universities. Ever since our nation's independence in 1783, we have known how to govern ourselves.

But, on the other hand, like Chileans before and under Allende, we have become stuck in political gridlock. Our citizens are split by deep disagreements about basic economic, social and political issues, including government interventions, immigration, investment in education and infrastructure, and inequality of income and opportunity. Our economy is decidedly sluggish.

Meanwhile, our politicians have been increasingly unwilling or unable to craft compromises. The most recent Congress passed fewer laws than any Congress in decades. Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill couldn't agree even on matters that should have been noncontroversial, such as funding the Federal Aviation Administration and confirming the nominations of judges and second-level government officers. And American democracy is being eroded by partisan measures aimed at preventing registration or voting by citizens likely to prefer the other party, and by massive distortion of elections by big money.

You may object that the American armed forces, unlike those in Chile or Indonesia or Spain, have no precedent at all for interfering in American politics. That's true. But consider what happened in 1933 in Austria, where private citizens had increasingly been arming themselves and forming private militias. When Austria's Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss abolished the country's legislature and established an authoritarian right-wing government, he didn't use the Austrian army to crush his left-wing political opponents. He did it with a militia of his own armed supporters.

Could that be possible here? Already, plenty of Americans are asserting the right to carry guns in previously unlikely places (such as in schools and government offices). Already, they are forming private militias for purposes such as patrolling the Mexican border and protecting a claimed right to graze cattle on federal lands. Again, when private citizen militias already carry guns for those purposes, it's "just" a matter of expanding the scope of an established principle to use guns for other purposes.

We Americans today are focused on the wrong threats to American democracy. We are obsessed with threats from overseas: from terrorists and Islamist extremists, and from other countries. But realistically, while terrorists and Islamists and other countries will continue to cause trouble for us, the chance of their ending American democracy is nil. The only real threat to American democracy comes from Americans themselves. If our politicians continue to yield to pressure from extremists not to compromise and remain mired in gridlock, the majority of decent Americans may in frustration come to view an authoritarian government as the only solution to political gridlock--as a lesser evil that has to be tolerated.

That said, I'm not claiming that all political differences can be resolved by compromise, especially when one side or another believes it can prevail without concessions. In Chile in 1973, the armed forces calculated, correctly, that they would quickly win an armed conflict. But Allende and his supporters also believed, incorrectly, that they could prevail, and so saw no need to compromise.

Compromise is also unlikely when the opposing parties consider their ideals nonnegotiable, and worth dying for. In 1940, after Hitler's defeat of France placed Britain at great military disadvantage in the face of an expected German invasion, the British Cabinet debated whether to attempt a compromise with Hitler by giving up Malta and Gibraltar in exchange for a peace agreement. Winston Churchill eventually convinced his Cabinet not to compromise. In retrospect, we consider that Churchill was correct in that refusal to compromise.

But neither of those impediments to compromise applies to the U.S. today. Americans are divided almost equally between liberals and conservatives; neither side has any reasonable hope of a quick victory if events turn violent. None of the issues about which Americans are now divided seems to me to approach in importance the survival of American democracy. Our issues aren't worth dying for, whereas, to the British of 1940, the consequences of a Nazi takeover were indeed worth dying for.

Decent Americans should learn from recent history. Compromising cherished political beliefs will be painful, for both Republicans and Democrats. But the alternative, as Chileans and Spaniards can attest, might be something far more painful than compromise.

What do torture and sex have in common?

By JOHN M. CRISP
Tribune News Service

John M. Crisp, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, teaches in the English Department at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas. Readers may send him email at jcrisp@delmar.edu.

What do torture and sex have in common? Not much, I hope.

But there is an odd consonance between two of our national history's most notorious presidential lies: Bill Clinton's "I did not have sex with that woman"; and George W. Bush's "The United States does not torture."

Both lies reflect embarrassment, guilt, and an extraordinary gift for rationalization.

Bill Clinton made a public statement, clearly understanding how it would be misunderstood, while harboring a private, self-serving definition of "sex" that, in his mind, made his public statement more or less true.

This style of thinking reminds me of the intellectual acrobatics that George W. Bush performed when he told the nation in 2006 that we weren't torturing anyone--meaning that no one was being stretched on the rack or having his fingernails pulled out--while CIA agents were subjecting terrorist suspects to waterboarding and other sophisticated torments.

My opinion is that the United States should be one of the countries in the world that refuses to torture in any way. My reluctance to accept torture has nothing to do with sympathy for terrorists. I'm concerned, rather, about the reversal in the course of human progress, away from enlightenment and back toward humanity's darkest practices: slavery, genocide, child labor, oppression of woman, human sacrifice and so on. Torture belongs in this group.

But if we're going to torture--and many Americans don't have a problem with it--let's be more upfront about it. Former Vice President Dick Cheney's cringe-worthy insistence that waterboarding isn't torture is a feeble denial of the obvious.

The testimony of First Lieutenant Grover Flint is more convincing than Cheney's because it lines up with common sense. Writer James Bradley quotes Flint, who described to a Senate panel the regular waterboarding of Filipinos during the Spanish American War: "A man suffers tremendously; there is no doubt about that." Others who have actually experienced it have called waterboarding "agony."

Clearly, waterboarding is torture. Is sleep deprivation torture, as well? Is extended exposure to loud music? The distinctions between these practices and more traditional forms of torture aren't important. The real question is whether the psychic and physical suffering and coercion are sufficiently severe to force someone to talk who would otherwise refuse. By definition, these methods are torture.

And if they are, will we use them? Probably. It's hard to imagine that in the future men like Cheney would develop qualms over using even the harshest methods of torture if they prevent an attack on innocent U.S. citizens.

And every discussion of torture quickly reaches this feasible justification for its use, the familiar "ticking time bomb" scenario. Suppose a terrorist has planted a bomb in the heart of New York City and refuses to reveal its location. Thousands will die unless he's forced to talk. The stakes can be intensified until the most committed pacifist is willing to go after the terrorist's fingernails with pliers.

But does this make us into torturers? Sailors stranded for weeks at sea in small boats have been known to eat human flesh, but that doesn't necessarily make them cannibals.

In any case, the "ticking time bomb" situation is extremely hypothetical and has little to do with the violations of national and international law that occurred after 9/11. And in some respects it needlessly complicates the real question: Are we a nation that tortures?

We're unlikely to figure out the answer to that question unless we're more straightforward about our history with torture both before and after 9/11. And we should be less tolerant of disingenuous utterances by the likes of Dick Cheney and George Bush, whose confused moral compasses and misjudgments led us into Iraq originally.

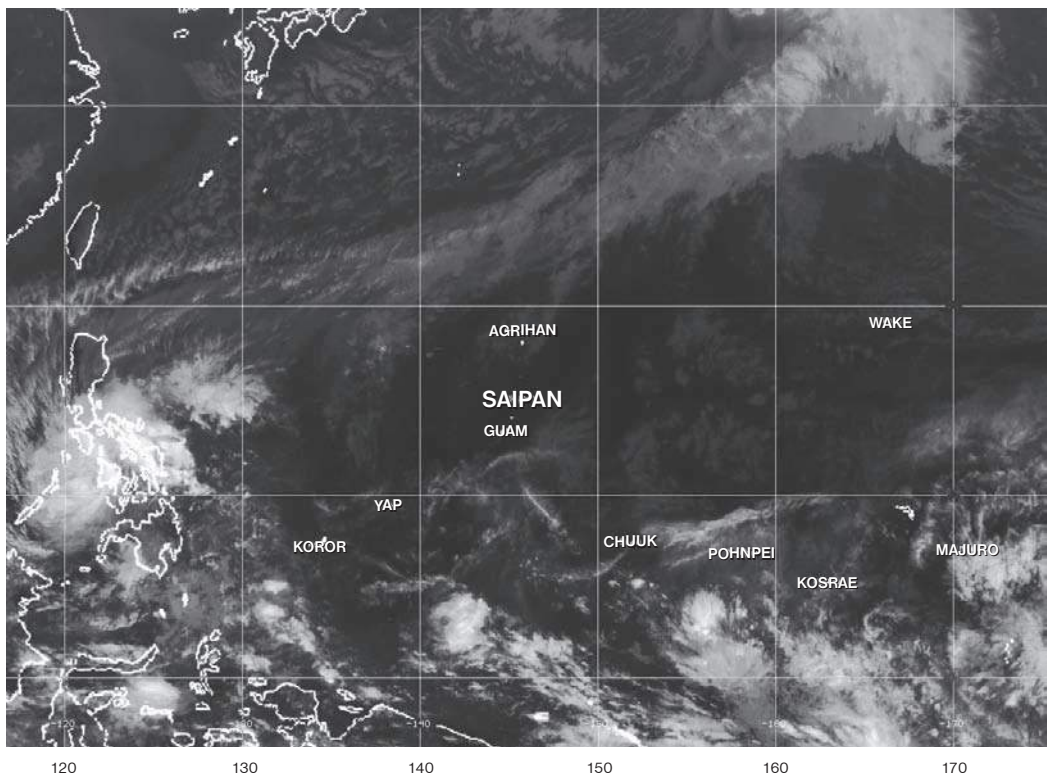
George W. Bush's torture lie echoes Bill Clinton's sex lie in another way, as well: Except for Monica Lewinski and the various terror suspects who were imprisoned and tortured by mistake, no one has suffered or paid any significant penalty for the actions these former presidents were attempting to cover up.

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼77°

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2014
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward from northwest of Wake Island at 25N154E to northwest of Saipan at 20N143E then continues as a shear line to beyond 130E at 14N. Cloudiness and patchy showers are along and up to 400 miles northwest of this boundary. Another cold front runs westward from 20N180 to near Wake Island at 19N167E. Cloudiness and patchy showers are along and up to 200 miles north of this boundary. A surge of westerly winds are triggering scattered showers and a few thunderstorms west of Koror or west of a line from 12N130E to 4N134E to EQ133E. A surface trough far south of Guam runs northwestward from EQ148E to 4N142E with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms within 125 miles of the trough. Trade-wind convergence along the equator is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms across Tarawa and Butaritari Atolls or south of a line from 3N155E to 3N170E to 6N180E.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Showers	▲86	▼79
Palau	Partly Cloudy	▲86	▼78
Yap	Partly Cloudy	▲84	▼78
Chuuk	Mostly Cloudy	▲86	▼81
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	▲86	▼80
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	▲85	▼81
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	▲85	▼80

Around the Globe

Auckland	Showers	▲72	▼63
Beijing	Windy	▲33	▼17
Hong Kong	Sunny	▲69	▼54
Honolulu	Showers	▲77	▼63
London	Mostly Sunny	▲43	▼34
Los Angeles	Showers	▲57	▼42
Manila	Cloudy	▲80	▼73
Melbourne	Sunny	▲78	▼56
Miami	Partly Cloudy	▲81	▼69
New York	Partly Cloudy	▲38	▼29
Osaka	Showers	▲57	▼34
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	▲40	▼35
Pusan	Windy	▲46	▼21
Rome	Sunny	▲39	▼32
Salem	Sunny	▲35	▼18
San Francisco	Windy	▲54	▼41
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	▲34	▼14
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲55	▼37
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	▲42	▼30

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

4:20 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.4 Feet
9:17 AM	Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
3:16 PM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
10:46 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.0 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Thursday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:50 PM
Saturday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Sunday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	1:57 PM	1:57 AM
Thursday	2:45 PM	2:52 AM
Friday	3:34 PM	3:47 AM
Saturday	4:25 PM	4:41 AM
Sunday	5:16 PM	5:33 AM

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2014

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA5070	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA5068	8:00am	8:50am	3
UA5068	8:40am	9:30am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	2:20pm	4:00pm	6, 7 via Rota
UA5078	3:10pm	4:00pm	1, 5
UA5038	3:10pm	4:00pm	2, 4
UA5040	6:55pm	7:45pm	1, 5
UA5078	8:35pm	9:25pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5044	10:40pm	11:30pm	1, 5

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA5039	2:20pm	2:55pm	6, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA5039	3:25pm	4:00pm	6, 7

SAIPAN-PALAU (ROR)

DL287	6:05am	1:05am+1	2, 6 via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL287	6:05am	8:40am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
DL297	4:20pm	7:05pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ606	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ606	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ604	3:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
7C 3401	4:30pm	8:20pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764A	1:30am	5:30am	4, 7
MU764	1:30am	5:30am	1, 5

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:30am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ606/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ606/701	2:40am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5069/PR111	2:45am	4:50pm	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	7:20am	2, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	8:45pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	9:10pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
DL287/473	6:05am	9:50pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6 via NRT
UA5071/PR111	6:40am	4:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5071/PR111	7:15am	4:50pm	1, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:00am	9:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5039/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	6, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	5 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	1 via GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	4 via GUM
OZ604/703	3:20pm	11:50pm	Daily via ICN

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ606/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:10am	12:50pm	1 via ICN
OZ606/721	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:40am	12:50pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5070/179	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:00am	10:35pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5039/179	2:20pm	10:35pm	6 via Rota-GUM
UA5078/179	3:10pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via GUM
OZ604/749	3:20pm	10:30pm	Daily via ICN

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA5069	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA5071	6:40am	7:30am	3
UA5071	7:15am	8:05am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	1:00pm	1:50pm	6, 7
UA5038	1:10pm	2:40pm	2, 4 via Rota
UA5077	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 5
UA5041	5:35pm	6:25pm	1, 5
UA5077	7:15pm	8:05pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5043	9:20pm	10:10pm	1, 5

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA5038	1:10pm	1:45pm	2, 4

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA5038	2:05pm	2:40pm	2, 4

PALAU (ROR)-SAIPAN

DL298	4:30am	3:00pm	3, 7 via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:25am	3:00pm	Daily
DL288	8:55pm	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ603	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
7C 3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ605	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ605	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:30pm	5:50am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763A	4:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 6
MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	4, 7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:55pm	3:10am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ704/603	12:10am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA5041	7:35am	6:25pm	1,5 via GUM
PR110/UA5077	7:35am	8:05pm	3, 6, 7 via GUM
PR110/UA5043	7:35am	10:10pm	1, 5 via GUM
DL172/288	9:40am	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7 via NRT
UA190/5077	9:55am	8:05pm	2, 7 via GUM
UA190/5077	10:00am	8:05pm	3, 6 via GUM
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA184/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	4 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	2 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:59pm	6:25pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:59pm	8:05pm+1	2 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:59pm	10:10pm+1	5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ746/603	12:30am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
OZ750/603	1:10am	2:20pm	Daiily via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA180/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA180/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA180/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA180/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1, 5 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA180/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1, 5 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

Business

Shocker of the year: Oil at $60

NEW YORK (AP)—For the first half of 2014 the oil market looked just as it had the year before—and the 2 years before that. Oil was over $100 and drivers in the U.S. were paying around $3.50 for gasoline.

Economies around the world seemed to have adjusted to higher priced oil and oil companies were using high profits and debt from willing lenders to scour the world for new reserves.

There was no real hope or expectation that U.S. drivers would see a price at the pump that started with a $2 ever again.

Then, despite intense turmoil in the Middle East and an improving economy in the U.S.—things that have historically sent oil prices soaring—the price of oil went into a nosedive. In the second half of 2014, it dropped by half, to depths not seen since May of 2009 when the U.S. was in the Great Recession.

WHAT HAPPENED

Oil reached a high for the year of $107 in late June after Islamic State fighters in Iraq seemed poised to threaten Iraq's southern oil fields and disrupt supplies from OPEC's second largest exporter. Then, as Islamic State's advance was halted, and Libya ramped up its production, oil began to drift lower.

Oil slipped further in the fall as signs emerged that global demand was weakening. The plunge accelerated in late November when OPEC decided to keep producing the same amount of oil despite the low demand.

WHY IT HAPPENED

Oil production in the U.S., Canada, Iraq and elsewhere had been climbing for several years, but rising demand in China and other developing nations along with sporadic outages around the world kept supply and demand in balance.

The price of oil remained remarkably steady, near $100 a barrel, for nearly four years. But U.S. oil production surged far beyond what even the most optimistic forecasts predicted. By the end of 2014, U.S. drillers were producing 9 million barrels of oil per day, up 80 percent since 2008 and the most in 3 decades.

At the same time, growth in demand for oil began to weaken. China, the biggest single source of oil demand growth in recent years, saw its economic expansion begin to slow. Japan slipped deeper into recession and Western Europe's economic struggles continued. The U.S. economy—the world's biggest oil consumer—grew nearly 4 percent over the summer, but efficiency measures and changing demographics in the U.S. are reducing demand for oil.

With rising global supplies and weak demand, prices dropped.

WHO WINS

Drivers, shippers, airlines and other consumers of fuel around the world are benefiting from sharply lower prices, and importing countries are benefiting from improving trade balances.

U.S. drivers are paying $2.38 a gallon for gasoline on average, the lowest since May of 2009. A typical household will save $550 over the course of the next year because of lower prices.

Diesel and jet fuel prices have also plunged, helping boost the profits and share prices of airlines and shippers.

WHO LOSES

For oil companies, oil-producing states, and oil-exporting countries the oil price plunge has been excruciating.

Oil companies generally continue to produce oil from wells they've already drilled when prices fall. But sharply lower revenue forces them to cut spending on new exploration projects, makes it harder for them to raise money, and worries lenders and investors that they won't be able to pay off debt.

States that rely on taxes from energy production such as Alaska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Texas will see lower revenues and some have already trimmed budgets. Major oil exporters such as Iran, Iraq, Russia and Venezuela are struggling under major budget shortfalls.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-008

8" ACP WATERLINE ABANDONMENT FOR SAN VICENTE SERVICE AREA EXTENSION PROJECT, SAIPAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the 8" ACP Waterline Abandonment for San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. This work consists of disconnecting customer service lateral connections off the 8" ACP and reconnecting these customers on to the proper tank service area distribution main. Work will also consist of installing new gate valve assemblies and the abandonment of the 8" ACP waterline. Payment is only for the items completely installed and accepted by CUC. The duration of the contract is 190 calendar days from date of award of the contract.

This project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a site visit is scheduled on **December 31, 2014 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan.

One (1) original and Seven (7) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"8" ACP Waterline Abandonment for San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, Saipan"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 20, 2015**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. *A Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. The award of a contract may be contingent upon the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) approval. If CPUC approval is required, the contract will not be executed by CUC until such approval is provided.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 2, 2015** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., Purchasing Officer, Procurement & Supply Division via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne Cabrera, Engineer, Water & Wastewater Division via email yvonne.cabrera@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-004

SECURITY GUARD SERVICES

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), Office of the Executive Director is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms to provide Security Guard Services for various posts at CUC, Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, wire transfer or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package set. Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division by December 29, 2014 to be considered.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a site visitation of CUC Saipan Facilities will be held on **December 30, 2014** at 10:00 a.m. (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building. A site visitation of CUC Rota Facilities will be conducted on January 2, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST). A site visitation of CUC Tinian Facilities will be conducted on January 5, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST).

Contractors must provide proof of "Indemnity Liability Insurance," specifically covering security workers assigned to CUC's compound. Coverage must be a minimum of $200,000.00. The Contractor shall agrees to and indemnify and hold CUC harmless from and against all liability, loss, damage or injury, and all cost and expenses (including attorneys' fees and costs of any suit related thereto) suffered or incurred by the Cooperative, arising from or related to Contractor's negligent performance under the contract.

Bidders shall provide a certification signed by a principal of the company stating that the company is currently in full compliance with all applicable CNMI and Federal Labor Laws and has been for the past Five (5) years. Bidders shall submit a listing of all of its employees (US & Foreign) with corresponding job titles and a certification of good standing from the CNMI Department of Labor. Failure of the company to provide the certification is grounds to reject the entire bid.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-15-004, Security Guard Services", to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST, Saipan Time) on January 15, 2015** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bid in anticipation of a contract. This request and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on **December 31, 2014** to Manny B. Sablan, Purchasing Officer, CUC Procurement & Supply Division via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Vincent Pangelinan, Safety Officer, CUC Compliance & Safety Division via email address vince.pangelinan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in said bid, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-009

A-16 LIFT STATION REHABILITAION PROJECT

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the rehabilitation and upgrade of A-16 Sewer Lift Station in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists, in general of the rehabilitation and upgrade of A-16 Sewer Lift Station. The work shall be done not to disrupt the daily operation of the sewer discharge. The work includes rehabilitation of the wet well, remove existing pumps and appurtenances and install new pumps, guide rails, control panel, valves, replacement of pipes and fittings, temporary wastewater bypass system, installation of new fence and gate, and other related work. CUC requires the Project to be completed in **270 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

The Project is funded by a grant from the United Stated of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project in contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, wire transfer or credit card in the amount of $200.00 for one IFB package set

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **January 13, 2015 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.10, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-15-009, A-16 Lift Station Rehabilitation Project"*, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 29, 2015**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A *Bid Guarantee* of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bid in anticipation of a contract. The award of a contract may be contingent upon the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) approval. If CPUC approval is required, the contract will not be executed by CUC until such approval is provided. This bid and ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 15, 2015** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Officer, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Birhen Martinez, Water/Wastewater Engineer via email address birhen.martinez@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Top business stories of 2014: US grows, world slows

By TALI ARBEL
AP BUSINESS WRITER

AP

In this Nov. 28, 2014 file photo, Target shoppers Kelly Foley, left, Debbie Winslow, center, and Ann Rich use a smartphone to look at a competitor's prices while shopping shortly after midnight on Black Friday in South Portland, Maine.

NEW YORK (AP)—This year showed how sheltered the U.S. economy is from geopolitical and health crises around the world. The global economy sputtered, but the U.S. powered ahead. Employers are finally hiring enough to lower unemployment. A plunge in gas prices and a rising stock market has Americans feeling richer and spending a bit more.

Those are some of the top business stories of 2014, as chosen by business editors at The Associated Press. Others include massive product disasters: A string of auto recalls after faulty ignition switches from General Motors Corp. and air bags in many car models caused injuries and deaths. Hackers stole personal information from millions of people in a wave of breaches at stores, banks, a movie studio and other organizations.

We're also becoming increasingly dependent on our phones and tablets, using them to communicate, play and pay.

Janet Yellen became the first woman to head the Federal Reserve and U.S. workers won higher pay as cities and states across the country raise the minimum hourly wage.

Corporate deal-making was also in the spotlight. Companies acquired each other at a level not seen since 2007, the year the Great Recession began, while a burst of businesses went public.

The top 10 business stories of 2014:

1 U.S. GROWS AS WORLD SLOWS: After a freezing winter put a chill on buying and selling, the U.S. economy has posted its best six months since 2003. But the rest of the world hasn't been as lucky. Japan has fallen back into recession. The 18 countries that make up the eurozone are barely growing and fear a dangerous drop in prices. Major developing nations aren't faring much better. China's growth has dropped to a five-year low of 7.3 percent. Western sanctions and dropping oil prices have decimated Russia's currency. Brazil just edged out of recession. What's helped the U.S. is its relative insulation. American consumers, not exports, are the main drivers of the world's largest economy.

2 JOBS ARE BACK: Millions of Americans still struggle with low pay and fewer hours of work than they want, and millions have given up looking for a job entirely. But five years after the recession ended, the U.S. job market is looking healthy. The unemployment rate is below 6 percent. Employers added nearly 3 million jobs, the most since 1999, as shoppers and businesses spend more. As a result, the Federal Reserve ended its recession-era stimulus program in October and is edging closer to lifting interest rates. The Fed has kept rates near zero since 2008 to spur lending and investment.

3 SECURITY BREACHES: The theft of 40 million credit and debit cards and 70 million personal records from Target last fall turned out to be just the beginning. Home Depot Inc. hackers nabbed 56 million cards and 53 million email addresses. There were breaches at Kmart, Dairy Queen, and Albertsons. JPMorgan Chase & Co. said hackers stole information covering 76 million households and 7 million small businesses. Sony employees' private information and emails were posted online. The consequences? Sony Pictures Entertainment canceled the release of "The Interview," a comedy about assassinating the North Korean leader, after hackers threatened to attack movie theaters. Target Corp. replaced top executives. Shops, card companies and banks sped up card security improvements.

4 OIL PLUNGE: Global crude prices have fallen to around $57 per barrel from this year's high of $115 because of more production, especially in the U.S., while slowing economies in Europe and Asia crimp demand. A rapid decline in the second half of the year pushed gasoline to below $2.50 a gallon in the U.S., the lowest price in nearly five years. Americans are pocketing $14.6 billion more a month than when gas was at its 2014 high of $3.70. Cheaper crude is also pumping up auto sales and saving airlines money on jet fuel. But drilling could slow in North Dakota's new boomtowns and other regions, hurting businesses that have cropped up. And governments in energy producers Russia, Venezuela and Iran are being squeezed, increasing the likelihood of political upheaval.

5 AUTO RECALLS: In the U.S. alone, automakers recalled more than 60 million cars and trucks. That far surpasses the previous record of 30.8 million in 2004. The bulk of those come from two problems that have led to nearly 50 deaths and dozens of injuries. Japanese air bag supplier Takata, whose air bags can inflate too fast and spew shrapnel, has fought regulators' demands to expand recalls. And GM was fined the maximum $35 million by U.S. safety regulators for dragging its feet—for a decade—over replacing faulty switches that can shut down car engines. The U.S. Justice Department is investigating both companies.

6 MOBILE MOMENTUM: PC sales are slumping, but mobile phone subscriptions are expected to reach 7 billion this year—the same as the world's population. Phone makers are launching cheaper smartphones aimed at developing countries, which could get billions more people online. Already, more than a billion people check Facebook on their phones and tablets. The social media giant spent $22 billion on a phone messaging app, WhatsApp. Uber, a hail-a-cab app, is valued at $40 billion. Apple Inc., the iPhone and iPad maker, launched a payment system that sidesteps cash and plastic.

7 STOCK MARKETS SOAR: Another year, another record. The end of the Federal Reserve's bond-buying stimulus program stressed investors this fall, but U.S. stocks kept rising, extending the bull market run to nearly six years. More companies acquired each other and big companies bought up more than $400 billion of their own stock, helping to put the Standard & Poor's 500 index on pace for a 12 percent gain in 2014. And despite the end of the Fed's bond purchases, which was expected to weigh on markets, bond prices rallied and rates dropped.

8 MINIMUM WAGE GROWTH: Inequality has been rising, and median household incomes have fallen since the recession began in late 2007. But the federal minimum hourly wage has remained at $7.25 since 2009. Labor organizers, fast-food workers and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. employees have campaigned for higher pay across the country. Congress hasn't acted, but cities and states—and President Barack Obama—have. Obama raised pay by executive order for government contractors, to $10.10 an hour. By Jan. 1, 29 states and Washington, D.C. will have a higher minimum wage than $7.25. Seattle approved an increase to $15 an hour, the highest rate in the country.

9 JANET YELLEN: The Federal Reserve had been led exclusively by men for a century. Then Janet Yellen, a 68-year-old former economics professor and the No. 2 at the Fed, became the first woman to lead the central bank. Plainspoken, with a trace of her native Brooklyn in her speech, Yellen criticizes inequality, focuses on jobs growth and has tried to demystify the moves of the notoriously opaque Fed. She has also tied the failure of most economists to predict the damages wrought by the financial crisis to a lack of diversity in the field. She says that increasing diversity is a priority at the central bank.

10 LET'S MAKE A DEAL: Higher stocks and confidence lifted global mergers and acquisitions volume to highest level since 2007. With a few days to go, global deal volume has risen 20 percent to $3.41 trillion, including debt. Climbing markets make it easier to do stock deals, and borrowing is cheap. Meanwhile, initial public offerings had their biggest year since 2000. Health care companies made up 37 percent of all IPOs in the U.S., nearly double the level in 2013. And the biggest IPO ever, that of China's e-commerce behemoth Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., raised $25 billion in September.

AP-Times Square poll: Feeling optimistic for 2015

WASHINGTON (AP)—Americans are closing out 2014 on an optimistic note, according to a new Associated Press-Times Square Alliance poll. Nearly half predict that 2015 will be a better year for them than 2014 was, while only one in 10 think it will be worse.

Here›s what Americans thought of 2014:

GAINS AT HOME, SLIPS ABROAD

On a personal level, about a third (34 percent) think 2014 was better than 2013, while 15 percent say 2014 was worse, and half see little difference.

Americans are slightly more likely than they were a year ago to believe that the current year was better than the last for the United States— 30 percent say so this year, while 25 percent said so in 2013. On the other hand, Americans are more likely than in the 2013 poll to say this year was worse than last for the world as a whole, with 38 percent saying so now after 30 percent said so a year ago.

THREE STORIES SHARE TOP SPOT

Americans are divided on the most important news event of 2014, with the rise of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, protests over the killings of black men including Michael Brown and Eric Garner by police officers, and the Ebola outbreak. Each was named by about one in 10 Americans. In a separate Associated Press survey of news directors and editors, the killings of unarmed men by police stand out more clearly as the top story, with 22 of 85 respondents choosing it as the top news, about twice as many as the Islamic State or Ebola stories.

Asked separately to rate the importance of 10 key stories, majorities call the expansion of the Islamic State militant group, the Ebola outbreak and the U.S. midterm elections extremely or very important stories. Nearly half rate immigration as that important, while 43 percent say so of the Brown and Garner stories. Only a third think the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, the situation between Russia and Ukraine, or the rising number of states with legal same-sex marriage were deeply important stories.

THE YEAR IN POP CULTURE

Few Americans rate this year›s crop of pop culture events as memorable, with one big exception: The death of Robin Williams and the ensuing discussion of mental health issues. About two-thirds call that a memorable event.

Michael Sam becoming the first openly gay player drafted into the National Football League, is rated forgettable by about half.

Events rating as forgettable by a majority of Americans include Taylor Swift going pop, and the marriages of George and Amal Clooney and Kim Kardashian and Kanye West.

Nation

AP poll: Police killings of blacks voted top story of 2014

By DAVID CRARY
AP NATIONAL WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—The police killings of unarmed blacks in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere—and the investigations and tumultuous protests they inspired—was the top news story of 2014, according to The Associated Press' annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors.

In a year crowded with dramatic and often wrenching news developments around the world, the No. 2 storywas the devastating outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, followed by the conflict in Iraq and Syria fueled by the brutal actions of Islamic State militants.

Among the 85 voters casting ballots, first-place votes were spread among 15 different stories. The Ferguson entry received 22 first-place votes, Ebola 11 and the Islamic State story 12.

The voting was conducted before the announcement that the United States and Cuba were re-establishing diplomatic relations and Sony Pictures' decision to withdraw its film "The Interview" in the wake of computer hacking and threats.

Last year's top story was the glitch-plagued rollout of President Barack Obama's health care overhaul, followed by the Boston Marathon bombing. The continuing saga of "Obamacare" made this year's Top 10 as well, coming in fifth.

The first AP top-stories poll was conducted in 1936, when editors chose the abdication of Britain's King Edward VIII.

Here are 2014's top 10 stories, in order:

■ **POLICE KILLINGS**: Some witnesses said 18-year-old Michael Brown had his hands up in surrender, others said he was making a charge. But there was no dispute he was unarmed and shot dead by a white police officer in Ferguson. In New York City, another unarmed black, Eric Garner, was killed after a white officer put him in a chokehold during an arrest for unauthorized cigarette sales. After grand juries opted not to indict the officers, protests erupted across the country, punctuated by chants of "Hands up, don't shoot" and "I can't breathe." In both cases, federal officials launched investigations.

AP

In this Monday, Oct. 13, 2014 file photo, Pastor Charles Burton lies on the driveway of the Ferguson, Mo., police station as he is outlined in chalk as a memorial to Michael Brown.

■ **EBOLA OUTBREAK**: The first wave of Ebola deaths, early in the year, attracted little notice. By March, the World Health Organization was monitoring the outbreak. By midsummer, it was the worst Ebola epidemic on record, with a death toll now approaching 7,000, mostly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. A Liberian man with the disease died at a Dallas hospital, followed by a few other cases involving U.S. health workers, sparking worries about the readiness of the U.S. health system.

■ **ISLAMIC STATE**: Militant fighters from the Islamic State group startled the world with rapid, brutal seizures of territory in Iraq and Syria. The U.S. and its allies responded with air strikes, hoping that Iraqi and Kurdish forces on the ground could retake captured areas. Revulsion toward Islamic State intensified as it broadcast videos of its beheadings of several Western hostages.

■ **US ELECTIONS**: For months, political oddsmakers sought to calculate if Republicans had a chance to gain control of the U.S. Senate. It turned out there was no suspense—the Republicans won 54 of the Senate's 100 seats, expanded its already strong majority in the House of Representatives, and gained at the state level, where Republicans now hold 31 governorships.

■ **OBAMACARE**: Millions more Americans signed up to be covered under President Obama's health care initiative, but controversy about "Obamacare" raged on. Criticism from Republicans in Congress was relentless, many Republican-governed states balked at participation, and opinion polls suggested most Americans remained skeptical about the program.

■ **MALAYSIA AIRLINES MYSTERY**: En route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 disappeared on March 8 with 239 people on board. In the weeks that followed, aircraft, ships and searchers from two-dozen countries mobilized to look in vain for the wreckage on the Indian Ocean floor. To date, there's no consensus as to why the plane vanished.

■ **IMMIGRATION**: Frustrated by an impasse in Congress, President Obama took executive actions in November to curb deportations for many immigrants residing in the U.S. illegally. Republican leaders in the House and Senate pledged efforts to block the president's moves. Prospects for reform legislation were dimmed earlier in the year by the influx of unaccompanied Central American minors arriving at the U.S. border, causing shelter overloads and case backlogs.

■ **TURMOIL IN UKRAINE**: A sometimes bloody revolt that toppled President Viktor Yanukovych in February triggered a chain of events that continued to roil Ukraine as the year drew to a close. Russia, worried that Ukraine would tilt increasingly toward the West, annexed the Crimean peninsula in March and backed an armed separatist insurgency in coal-rich eastern regions of Ukraine. The U.S. and its allies responded with sanctions against Russia.

■ **GAY MARRIAGE**: Due to a wave of federal court rulings, 19 more U.S. states began allowing same-sex marriages, raising the total to 35 states encompassing about 64 percent of the population. Given that one U.S. court of appeals bucked the trend by upholding state bans on gay marriage, there was widespread expectation that the U.S. Supreme Court will take up the issue and make a national ruling.

■ **VA SCANDAL**: The Department of Veterans Affairs became embroiled in a nationwide scandal over allegations of misconduct and cover-ups. Several senior officials were fired or forced to resign, including VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. At the heart of the scandal was the VA hospital in Phoenix; allegations surfaced that 40 veterans died while awaiting treatment there.

Yes-We-Can president faces twilight of maybes

WASHINGTON (AP)—It was supposed to be a joke. "Are you still president?" comedian Stephen Colbert asked Barack Obama earlier this month.

But the question seemed to speak to growing weariness with the president and skepticism that anything will change in Washington during his final two years in office. Democrats already are checking out Obama's potential successors. Emboldened Republicans are trying to push aside his agenda in favor of their own.

At times this year, Obama seemed ready to move on as well. He rebelled against the White House security "bubble," telling his Secret Service detail to give him more space. He chafed at being sidelined by his party during midterm elections and having to adjust his agenda to fit the political interests of vulnerable Democrats who lost anyway.

Yet the November election that was a disaster for the president's party may have had a rejuvenating effect on Obama. The morning after the elections, Obama told senior aides, "If I see you moping, you will answer to me."

People close to Obama say he is energized at not having to worry about helping—or hurting—Democrats in another congressional election on his watch. He has become more comfortable with his executive powers, moving unilaterally on immigration, Internet neutrality and climate change in the last two months. And he sees legacy-building opportunities on the international stage, from an elusive nuclear deal with Iran to normalizing relations with Cuba after a half-century freeze.

"He gained some clarity for the next two years that is liberating," said Jay Carney, Obama's former press secretary.

Still, pillars of Obama's second-term agenda—gun control, raising the federal minimum wage, universal pre-school—seem destined to stand unfulfilled. Wrapping up the Iraq and Afghanistan wars isn't turning out to be nearly the tidy success story Obama once envisioned. Even supporters say one of the president's topremaining priorities may have to be simply preventing Republicans from dismantling his earlier accomplishments, including the health care law.

Obama

The Yes-We-Can man is entering a twilight of maybes, his presidency still driven by high ambitions but his power to achieve them running out.

■■■

Before the midterm election results arrived, Obama's advisers say, the president realized he would finish his presidency with Republicans running Capitol Hill. He concluded the status quo would mean more gridlock.

Indeed, 2014 had been another year of fits and starts for a White House that has struggled to find its footing in Obama's second term.

The feeble HealthCare.gov website stabilized, but scandal enveloped the Department of Veterans Affairs. Syria got rid of its chemical weapons, but the violent extremist Islamic State group pulled the U.S. back into military conflict in the Middle East. The unemployment rate fell, but so did Obama's approval ratings—to the lowest levels of his presidency.

Nearly two dozen White House officials, former Obama aides, presidential historians and political analysts discussed Obama's standing as he closes his sixth year in office, some on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss their conversations with the president or his top advisers.

For much of the year, Obama appeared to struggle with the realization that his political standing had slipped.

He publicly complained about criticism of his foreign policy by pundits in Washington and New York. Despite pleas from his party to stay out of November's elections, he said his policies were indeed on the ballot. He desperately looked for ways to break free of the confines of the White House.

■■■

Obama is realistically optimistic about what he can get done over the next two years, advisers say. He wants to try tax reform and sees opportunities to accelerate growth and job creation with the economy on firmer footing. Aides have reached out to historians and political scientists to solicit ideas for Obama's next State of the Union address.

Yet the president is forging ahead as somewhat of an isolated figure. Congressional Democrats are increasingly willing to go against him. And in the West Wing, Obama's tight inner circle of loyal advisers keeps shrinking.

The trio of political gurus who helped direct his presidential campaigns—David Axelrod, Robert Gibbs and David Plouffe—have moved on. And former chief of staff Rahm Emanuel is now the mayor of Chicago. Other longtime aides are eyeing exits. Bringing in fresh talent is getting harder.

World

Top news of 2014 left public grasping for answers

By ADAM GELLER
AP NATIONAL WRITER

More than nine months after searchers began scouring the seas for a Malaysia Airlines jetliner that vanished with 239 people aboard, the catastrophe defies resolution.

The long hunt for clues to Flight 370's fate set the tone for many of the headlines that defined 2014. It was a year that often left the public and its leaders grasping for answers.

From Ukraine to the Middle East, from the Ebola threat to the tensions exposed by police killings in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere, many stories fed into a growing sense of frustration.

The conflict over Ukraine stretches back to President Victor Yanukovych's ouster in February. When Russia grabbed the Crimean peninsula, it set off a standoff reminiscent of the Cold War.

Many of the biggest news events capture the public's attention for just a few days, or perhaps weeks, before slipping from view. Not in 2014.

The Ebola crisis began with a case in Guinea last December. A year later, the disease has already killed at least 6,000 people. Nearly all of those deaths came in three west African countries. As the year neared an end, the World Health Organization questioned reports of progress in containing the disease based on data it says is filled with inconsistencies.

Meanwhile, violence in the Middle East again took command of the headlines.

In Gaza, a 50-day war killed more than 2,100 Palestinians and 72 Israelis. But it ended with no hint of a route toward resolution.

After nearly four years of civil war in Syria, the radical Islamic State group's rapid expansion and videotaped beheadings of Western hostages inspired a U.S.-led campaign of more 1,000 bombing attacks on IS strongholds in Iraq and Syria. As the year ends, leaders have warned that their vows to destroy the insurgency could take years to fulfill.

"We recognize that hard work remains to be done," U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said.

Americans turned their attention to suburban St. Louis, where in August a white police officer fatally shot black 18-year-old Michael Brown. Exactly what happened was clouded by conflicting witness accounts. Brown's death, and a grand jury's decision not to charge the officer, prompted widespread anger over law enforcement's treatment of young, black men.

The larger narrative of 2014 is of a world faced by daunting challenges and few answers within reach. That was clear in October, when Peter Foley, an Australian coordinating the hunt for the vanished Malaysia Airlines jet, faced questions about its direction.

"We are in for the long haul," Foley said.

AP

Relatives and next-of-kin of passengers on the AirAsia flight QZ8501 offer prayers, waiting for the latest news on the search of the missing jetliner at Juanda International Airport in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2014.

AP

A relative of passengers on the AirAsia flight QZ8501 wait prayerfully for the latest news on the search of the missing jetliner at Juanda International Airport in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2014.

AP

In this Oct. 20, 2014, file photo, thick smoke and flames from an airstrike by the U.S.-led coalition rise in Kobani, Syria, as seen from a hilltop on the outskirts of Suruc, at the Turkey-Syria border. Kobani, also known as Ayn Arab, and its surrounding areas, has been under assault by extremists of the Islamic State group since mid-September and is being defended by Kurdish fighters.

AP

In this March 24, 2014, file photo, a relative of Chinese passengers aboard Malaysia Airlines MH370 grieves after being told of the latest news in Beijing, China.

AP

In this Aug. 11, 2014, file photo, police wearing riot gear walk toward a man with his hands raised Monday, Aug. 11, 2014, in Ferguson, Mo. On Aug. 9, a white police officer fatally shot Michael Brown, an unarmed black 18-year old, in the St. Louis suburb.

AP

In this Sept. 30, 2014, file photo, Nine-year-old Nowa Paye is taken to an ambulance after showing signs of the Ebola infection in the village of Freeman Reserve, about 30 miles north of Monrovia, Liberia.

Life & Style

Ice bucket, Brazil elections popular on Facebook

NEW YORK (AP)—Day after day, Facebook captures our best and worst moments, from the birth of a new baby to heated political spats. So what got discussed the most in 2014? The Ice Bucket Challenge and the death of Robin Williams, to name a few.

The list Facebook released Tuesday is a testament to its global reach, given that more than 80 percent of its users live outside the U.S. and Canada. Worldwide topics—the World Cup soccer tournament and the Ebola outbreak—occupied the top two spots. But No. 3 was the presidential election in Brazil. Facebook says some 48 million people had 674 million interactions—status updates, photos, videos, comments and likes—about the highly contested event. That made it the most talked-about election of 2014—even more than the congressional midterms in the U.S.

"At its best, social media makes the world a smaller place and builds community on a global level," Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, said in an interview.

AP

In this July 29, 2014 file photo, smoke and fire from an Israeli strike rise over Gaza City. The conflict in Gaza placed sixth on Facebook's list of most popular topics worldwide in 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared.

SPORTS, SPORTS, SPORTS

Sandberg saw it fitting that the World Cup—the world's most widely watched sporting event—was also the most widely discussed event this year. More than 350 million people had 3 billion interactions about the tournament.

"Historically, (the World Cup) has meant watching it from your TV, from a distance," she said. "But Facebook and social media made it much more social and much more connected."

After a back injury forced Brazil's Neymar to miss the semifinal against Germany, the soccer star used Facebook to thank fans for their support and encourage his teammates. Brazil, of course, suffered a devastating 7-1 loss.

Dwarfed by soccer, the Super Bowl in the U.S. came in at No. 8, with more than 50 million people discussing the game between the Seattle Seahawks and the Denver Broncos. And if that's not enough sports, the Sochi Winter Olympics squeaked by to make it to No. 10.

DOING GOOD?

From June 1 to Sept. 1, Facebook users shared more than 17 million videos related to the Ice Bucket Challenge, a campaign designed to raise awareness and money for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg joined celebrities and everyday users alike to post videos of themselves getting dumped by ice water. All told, those videos were viewed 10 billion times by more than 440 million people. Former President George W. Bush had the most widely watched video, with more than 39 million views.

For Sandberg, the Ice Bucket Challenge marked an important milestone for Facebook—the explosion of video content on the site.

"I think the Ice Bucket Challenge was the first time a lot of people realized you could shoot a video and share it," she said.

From July 29 to Aug. 27, the ALS Association raised $94 million, compared with just $2.7 million a year earlier.

The Ebola outbreak was also on a lot of people's minds this year, and Zuckerberg donated $25 million toward fighting the disease. Facebook also set up a donation button that made it easy for users to send money to charities. Facebook hasn't said how much that effort raised.

SERIOUS STUFF

Think Facebook is all cute kittens and BuzzFeed lists? Well, that's part of it, but there was also a lot of serious discussion on the site this year. People talked about the conflict in Gaza, the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 and the shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

By contrast, six of the 10 most searched-for terms on Yahoo this year were celebrities, such as Miley Cyrus and Kim Kardashian, showing that even as people talk about serious matters on social media, the information they search for can also be a bit more low-brow.

FACEBOOK'S YEAR

Facebook, too, had an eventful 2014. The company founded in a Harvard dorm room turned 10 this year, "and that's clearly a really big deal," Sandberg said. She also cited the launch of Internet.org, Facebook's ambitious project to get everyone in the world connected online, as one of the year's key moments.

Meanwhile, she said, mobile advertising "became the majority of what we were able to sell and deliver."

As the world goes mobile, so does Facebook. That's one certainty for 2015.

On our minds: Top 10 topics on Facebook in 2014

What's popular? Facebook has a good gauge based on what people type into the box that says, "What's on your mind?"

On Tuesday, the company released top 10 lists for 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared.

AROUND THE WORLD:	
1.	World Cup
2.	Ebola Virus Outbreak
3.	Elections in Brazil
4.	Robin Williams
5.	Ice Bucket Challenge
6.	Conflict in Gaza
7.	Malaysia Airlines
8.	Super Bowl
9.	Michael Brown/Ferguson
10.	Sochi Winter Olympics
IN THE U.S.:	
1.	Ebola Virus Outbreak
2.	Ice Bucket Challenge
3.	Robin Williams
4.	Super Bowl
5.	Michael Brown & Ferguson
6.	World Cup
7.	Israel-Gaza Conflict
8.	Midterm Elections
9.	Malaysia Airlines
10.	ISIS

Katy Perry, spider-dog top popular online videos

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Katy Perry and a dog dressed like a spider are among 2014's top online video subjects.

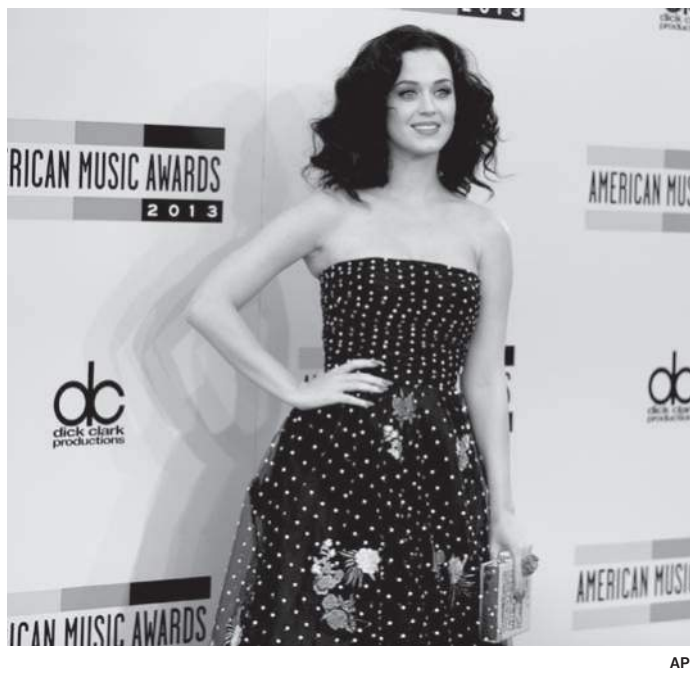
Perry's "Dark Horse" reigned supreme on YouTube's top 10 most popular music videos, while a prank featuring a dog done up as a spider chasing unsuspecting pedestrians led the site's top 10 trending videos.

YouTube said Tuesday the top trending videos for 2014 were based on views, shares, comments, likes and more. Perry's "Dark Horse" has galloped away with over 715 million views, and Polish prankster Sylwester Wardega's spider-dog video has caught more than 113 million views.

Other top trending video subjects included soccer stars Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar in a Nike commercial, a singing nun on the Italian edition of "The Voice," a group of strangers kissing for the first time and the comic book characters Superman and Goku engaging in a fictional rap battle.

Enrique Iglesias, Shakira, Jason Derulo and Sia were among other artists with music videos on YouTube's list.

YouTube's top 10 trending videos of 2014:	
1.	"Mutant Giant Spider Dog," SA Wardega.
2.	"Winner Stays," Nike Football.
3.	"FIRST KISS" by Tatia Pllieva.
4.	"Suor Cristina Scuccia," TheVoiceOf Italy.
5.	"iPhone 6 Plus Bend Test," Unbox Therapy.
6.	"Bars & Melody," Britain's Got Talent.
7.	"Puppy Love," Budweiser.
8.	"Devil Baby Attack," DevilsDueNYC.
9.	"Goku vs. Superman," ERB.
10.	"10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman," Street HarassmentVideo.
YouTube's top 10 music videos of 2014:	
1.	"Dark Horse," Katy Perry featuring Juicy J.
2.	"Bailando," Enrique Iglesias featuring Descemer Bueno and Gente De Zona.
3.	"Can't Remember to Forget You," Shakira featuring Rihanna.
4.	"La La La," Shakira featuring Carlinhos Brown.
5.	"Wiggle," Jason Derulo featuring Snoop Dogg.
6.	"Fancy," Iggy Azalea featuring Charli XCX.
7.	"Chandelier," Sia.
8.	"Shake It Off," Taylor Swift.
9.	"All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor.
10.	"Anaconda," Nicki Minaj.



AP

In this Nov. 24, 2013 file photo, Katy Perry arrives at the 2013 American Music Awards, in Los Angeles. Perry and a dog dressed as a spider are among 2014's top online video subjects. Perry's "Dark Horse" reigned supreme on YouTube's top 10 most popular music videos, while a prank featuring a dog dressed as a spider chasing unsuspecting pedestrians led the site's top 10 trending videos.

‘Frozen’ is named top entertainer of the year by AP

AP

This image provided by Disney shows a teenage Elsa the Snow Queen, voiced by Idina Menzel, in a scene from the animated feature “Frozen.” Although the animated film opened late in 2013, the story of Elsa, Anna, Olaf, Kristoff and Sven easily outpaced other vote-getters like “Sherlock” star Benedict Cumberbatch, TV guru Shonda Rimes, musicians Beyonce and Pharrell Williams for entertainer of the year. “Frozen” has earned Disney more than $1.27 billion at the box office worldwide, becoming the most successful animated movie of all time. Its signature song “Let It Go” won an Oscar and a national touring live version on ice has been a huge draw.

By MARK KENNEDY
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

NEW YORK (AP) — If you have children, or know someone who does, or just listened to one recently, the choice of Associated Press Entertainer of the Year won’t come as much of a shock: It’s “Frozen,” and in 2014, we just couldn’t let it go.

Although the animated film opened late in 2013, the story of Elsa, Anna, Olaf, Kristoff and Sven easily outpaced other vote-getters like “Sherlock” star Benedict Cumberbatch, TV guru Shonda Rimes, musicians Beyonce and Pharrell Williams, and even an entry for the culture’s fixation on the female rear.

In 47 ballots submitted by members and subscribers of the AP, “Frozen” won 12 votes. Taylor Swift had 8. Matthew McConaughey and Jimmy Fallon were tied for third with 7 votes each. Voters were asked to consider who had the most influence on entertainment and culture in 2014.

“Frozen” has earned Disney more than $1.27 billion at the box office worldwide, becoming the most successful animated movie of all time. Its signature song, “Let It Go,” won an Oscar, and a national touring live version on ice has been a huge draw. The lines of girls wearing sparkly dresses waiting for a chance to see Elsa and Anna at Disneyland are staggering. “Frozen” was the most searched movie in 2014, according to Google.

“It’s amazing,” said Chris Buck, who co-directed and co-wrote the film with Jennifer Lee. “A year later, it’s still crazy.” Asked if they had managed to get their heads around the film’s popularity, Lee replied: “I don’t know if it’s possible. I kind of hope it’s not possible because this is a really great feeling.”

The film’s gravitational pull has now supplanted Barbie as No. 1 on the holiday wish lists of girls, according to a survey by the National Retail Federation. Barbie had been the queen for 11 years in a row, but felt a chill this year from the kingdom of Arendelle.

The Oscar-winning story about how the sisters Anna and Elsa overcome Elsa’s terrible power to turn everything into ice and snow has songs by the husband-and-wife songwriting team Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez. It features the voices of Kristen Bell, Idina Menzel, Jonathan Groff, Josh Gad and Santino Fontana.

One Entertainer of the Year voter said the film had layers of magic: “’Frozen’ has become nearly unavoidable. Before seeing the movie, I knew the names of each main character as well as the theme song. But it’s more than that. Sisterhood is something so important to little girls whether they are an only child or have 10 siblings,” wrote Jill Harry of The Derrick and The News-Herald of Oil City, Pennsylvania.

“The movie takes that theme, that feeling and perfectly matches it with the magic Disney is known to produce. The end result is a movie that has become an obsession. And now snowflake blue is the new black.”

While the nation fell hard for the film, one famous actor was positively tongue-tied. John Travolta butchered the pronunciation of Menzel’s name at the Oscar ceremony. What came out was something that sounded like “Adele Dazeem,” but it only helped Menzel sell more tickets to her Broadway show “If/Then.”

“Frozen” translated into cold, hard cash at the box office. Apple said the animated film’s soundtrack was the year’s top selling album on iTunes, and “Frozen” merchandise accounted for nine of the top 10 best-selling items in Disney stores. There were “Frozen” sing-alongs on Disney cruises to the Caribbean, a book series was published and some of the characters made it onto the fourth season of ABC fantasy-drama “Once Upon a Time.”

Its creators are still coming to grip with its power. “We have tried to figure it out or define it and dissect it to figure out what it all was,” said Buck. “We call it lightning in a bottle. There is something there and I can’t really describe it.”

Parody and tribute videos never slowed down in 2014, and boys and girls continued to spontaneously belt out “Let It Go” on playgrounds or cite its memorable quotes like, “The cold never bothered me anyway,” ‘’I’m Olaf and I like warm hugs!” and “Some people are worth melting for.”

Lee said she and Buck were raised on the classic Disney films and they wanted to do “a sincere, modern fairy tale” that “spoke to this generation.” The music was classic but also fresh, and they tried to make the characters three-dimensional.

“It was really this big effort to ask, ‘Can we create that magic that we felt as kids with what the kids expect today?’” she said. “That’s all we could do. We kept pushing and pushing and praying that people would come to see it.”

Relax, more “Frozen” is on the horizon. The short film “Frozen Fever” comes out in March, a full-length film sequel is in development and a Broadway musical is planned. And early next year, Lea Michele will sing “Let It Go” in the season 6 two-hour premiere of “Glee.”

Lee and Buck said they were happy to return to Arendelle to work on the short film. “There is something magic about these characters and this cast and this music. Hopefully, the audiences will enjoy the short we’re doing, but we felt it again. It was really fun.”

“Frozen” now becomes the eighth AP Entertainer of the Year. Past titleholders include Jennifer Lawrence, Adele, Lady Gaga, Tina Fey, Betty White, Taylor Swift and Stephen Colbert.

Over and out: TV flops, exits and endings in 2014

By FRAZIER MOORE
AP TELEVISION WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Along with its triumphs, the world of TV had its share of setbacks in 2014. Here’s a sample:

■ “How I Met Your Mother” Concludes: This long-running CBS sitcom met few viewers’ expectations for a slam-bang finish. Its big reveal—naming the titular “your mother” after nine years of teasing—yielded a finale only slightly less tangled than the ending of “Lost.” And even “Lost” resisted the temptation to include a blue French horn in its wrap-up.

■ David Gregory Exits “Meet the Press”: After months of speculation that Gregory was being ousted from the program he had hosted since 2008, NBC News announced in August he was toast. That was 18 months after the network signed him to a new contract it described as “a long-term commitment.” And four months after NBC News’ president defended him in a memo to “Meet the Press” staff expressing support “for David, now and into the future.” His future was short-lived. He was out in a jiffy, with Chuck Todd his replacement.

■ Ray Rice’s Elevator Assault: Over and over, viewers were force-fed the chilling video of Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice striking his then-fiancee and knocking her out. After it was released on a Monday in September, the video of Janay Palmer crumpling to the elevator floor was aired repeatedly by multiple networks. In one particular hour, the clip aired 37 times on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC. But by Thursday, many of those networks vowed to give it a rest. But Rice isn’t necessarily off the air. Having lately appealed his indefinite suspension by the NFL, and won, he’s eligible to play again in the NFL—and log more TV face time.

■ “Utopia” Unrealized: Arriving with much fanfare, this Fox reality show stranded a group of strangers at a remote site where, during the year to follow, they were meant to build a more perfect society. But it turned out they couldn’t even build a show that viewers would watch. Puny ratings forced its cancellation after just two months. For Fox (and the human race) “Utopia” swiftly proved to be a dream unfulfilled.

■ “Peter Pan Live!” It proposed a bold counter-theory for the space-time continuum. It argued for eternal youth in a realm only accessible by fairy dust-assisted human flight. Unfortunately, NBC’s live production of this time-honored musical never managed to take off. Viewers had the feeling they had grown up and grown old by the end of its three hours struggling to get off the ground.

Year's top song is Beyonce, Sia's 'Pretty Hurts'

NEW YORK (AP)—Need a new playlist? Check out the Associated Press' top songs of 2014 list. Heard them before? Then play them again.

1 "Pretty Hurts," Beyonce: Contemporary music's top singer and songwriter—Beyonce and Sia—join forces to create a song that is heavy, deeply felt, emotional—but most important, beautiful. "Pretty Hurts," with its winning accompanying music video, tackles the insecurities anyone and everyone feels, and Beyonce's rising vocals bring Sia's words to life, including lyrics like "it's the soul that needs surgery." I could cry.

2 "Chandelier," Sia: Being selfish is a good thing: Sia, who has written for Rihanna, Katy Perry and others, decided to keep "Chandelier" for herself, and thankfully so. The upbeat party anthem can get anyone in the right mood.

3 "I'm Not the Only One," Sam Smith: Yes, Sam Smith stole your heart with "Stay With Me," but "I'm Not the Only One" proves he will be around for a long time. His honest delivery, lyrically and vocally, makes him so irresistible it makes you wonder who was so foolish to have broken his heart.

4 "All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor: The year's most viral and colorful song still sounds good months after its release. "All About That Bass" is addictive and empowering, and it showcases bright newcomer Meghan Trainor, who we think won't fall into the trap of one-hit wonder status.

AP

In this Sept. 17, 2014 file photo, British soul singer Sam Smith poses for a portrait, in New York.

5 "Bailando," Enrique Iglesias featuring Sean Paul, Gente de Zona and Descemer Bueno: It doesn't matter if it's the Spanish or English version, Enrique Iglesias' "Bailando" is the track with the year's most swag. I wanna be contigo, and live contigo, and dance contigo!

6 "Don't Tell 'Em," Jeremih featuring YG: The other song of the year full of swagger is Jeremih's "Don't Tell Em," thanks to DJ Mustard's grungy but digestible production. Call him producer of the year: He also helmed Tinashe's "2 On," Big Sean's "I Don't" and Fergie's "L.A. Love (La La)," among other favorites.

7 "Take Me to Church," Hozier: Hozier's humane and emotional lyrics, matched with his commanding voice, make for a bluesy, soulful, indie rock treasure with "Take Me to Church," likely to win the Grammy Award for song of the year.

8 "Day Drinking," Little Big Town: "Why don't we do a little day drinking?" Little Big Town asks—rather sings—on their latest hit. And why not? It would feel even better doing so while listening to this summer anthem, highlighted by the foursome's awesome harmonies and that guitar solo.

9 "Turn Down for What," DJ Snake and Lil Jon: Do I really need to explain why this is so good?

10 "Blank Space," Taylor Swift: Kudos to Tay Tay for writing a song about the media's portrayal of her love life—or the multitude of them. It's creative, smart, funny and cool.

Honorable Mention: "Cool Kids," Echosmith; "Rather Be," Clean Bandit featuring Jess Glynne; "i," Kendrick Lamar; "Boom Clap," Charli XCX; "Waves," Mr. Probz.

This year's top album is Sam Smith's 'In The Lonely Hour'

NEW YORK (AP)—Up for a good long listen? Check out the Associated Press' top albums of 2014 list:

1 "In the Lonely Hour," Sam Smith: Sam Smith's album was an emotional roller coaster—a ride you couldn't get off of even if you tried. The songs, anchored by his piercing voice, had the power to make you cry, smile, shiver and even dance. Tracks like the radio hit, "Stay With Me," and "Leave Your Lover" are intense and emotional, making for an honest, beautiful album that soothes the soul. There can only be only reply when he sings, "Oh, won't you stay with me?" That would be a resounding, "Yes."

2 "2014 Forest Hills Drive," J. Cole: J. Cole: Another honest man: J. Cole. The insanely talented rapper captures so much on his third album, tackling various topics from losing his virginity to growing up in Fayetteville, North Carolina to contemporary rappers, who should take note. His rhymes are smart, and he is a powerful storyteller that, at times, echoes rap king Nas.

3 "LP1," FKA twigs: FKA twigs' ethereal and eerie album is heavenly. The English singer's soft vocals layered over weird beats make this 10-track set a must listen, thanks to addictive tracks like "Two Weeks," ''Numbers" and "Lights On."

4 "Sucker," Charli XCX: Let's boom clap for Charli XCX and her top notch album, "Sucker." The mix of rock and pop songs are confident and catchy, and prove that although Charli XCX was the side chick on songs like Iggy Azalea's "Fancy" and Icona Pop's "I Love It," she's the real leading lady.

5 "Aquarius," Tinashe: Tinashe, who is also part of the alternative R&B movement, delivered an album that moved the needle this year. Though she had a huge hit with the addictive "2 On," the singer proves she's much more than a one-hit wonder on "Aquarius." Her whispery vocals glide over the songs' beats so nicely you'll constantly hit repeat. "Just Like Vegas" is only one of the many standouts.

6 "Evergreen," Broods: The parents of brother and sister duo Broods should be proud. The New Zealand group's album, "Evergreen," is a winner with instrumentalist Caleb Nott shining on the eclectic, alternative production, giving Georgia Nott a platform to showcase her calming vocals, especially on "Killing You" and "Mother & Father."

7 "My Everything," Ariana Grande: Ariana Grande has already launched four Top 10 hits from her second album, but there's so much more that bangs beyond "Bang Bang" on "My Everything." The powerful vocalist nails it with a cool blend of R&B and pop songs that's almost as good as her revering 2013 debut.

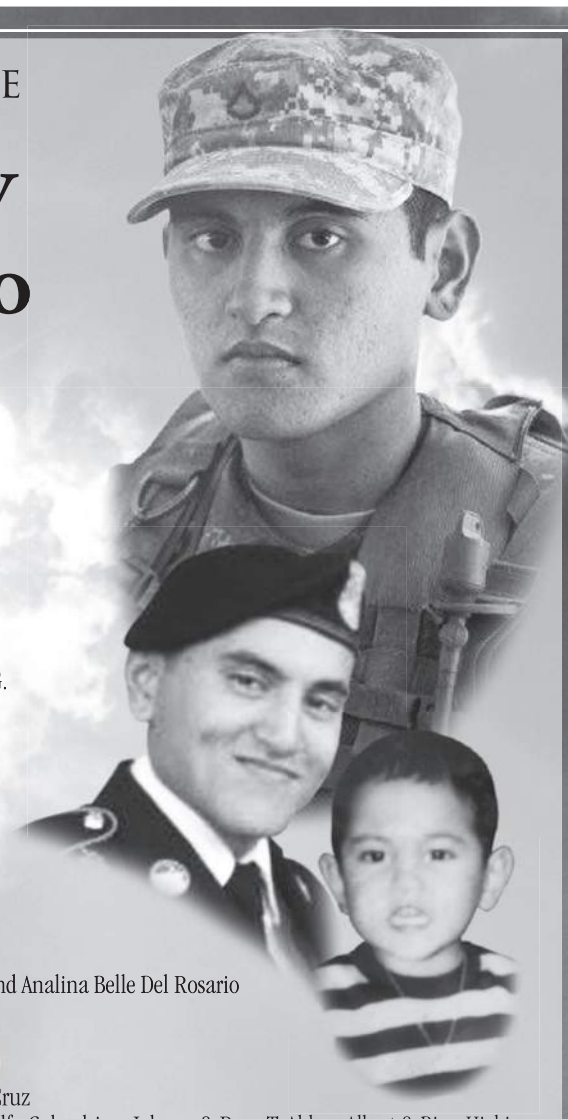
8 "Montevallo," Sam Hunt: Props to singer-songwriter Sam Hunt for blending country music with elements of R&B, electronica and hip-hop. It might sound wild, but it works on his debut album, mainly thanks to Hunt's swagger and sexy sing-talk vocal delivery. Sam Smith isn't the only Sam stealing hearts.

9 "Do It Again," Robyn and Royksopp: Swedish singer Robyn and Norwegian duo Royksopp 5-song dance EP is oh so good, and a tease. Full album please?

10 "1000 Forms of Fear," Sia: From "Chandelier" to "Elastic Heart" to "Eye of the Needle," Sia's latest album is just another laudable effort in her rich catalog, which is worth exploring if you've just discovered the gem this year.

IN CELEBRATION OF HIS NEW LIFE

†Christopher Henry Manalo Del Rosario



Fondly known as as "Chris"

Born to Life on April 16, 1993 and was called to his Eternal Rest on December 24, 2014 by our heavenly father at the age of 21.

He will be greeted at the Gates of Heaven by His:

Grandfathers:	†Orlando V. Del Rosario & †Jose DLG. Diaz
Grandparents In-Law:	†Maria Taitano & †Susan Oquila
Great Grandparents:	†Juan M. & †Ana DLG. Manalo, †Antonio A. & †Amalia DLG. Diaz, †Julio S. & †Dorotea V. Del Rosario, †Juanito & †Lucila Q. Flores
Uncles & Aunts:	Jose A. Manalo, Juan DLG. Manalo, Lorenzo DLG. Manalo, Henry Hudson, Antonio DLC. Cabrera, Maria A. Manalo, Joann C. Hernandez, Ana M. Cabrera, Ana D. Magofna, Candido Diaz, Vicente Diaz, Antonio Diaz, Ramon Diaz, Jesus Diaz, Marty Taylor

His Memories Will Forever Live, In The Hearts of His:

Wife:	Svetlana Sasamoto Del Rosario
Children:	Londan Christopher & Savannah
Parents:	Henry Flores & Velma Manalo Del Rosario
Brother and Sisters:	Jay Del Rosario, Christylynn Hope Del Rosario and Analina Belle Del Rosario
Parents In-Law:	Felix T. Jr. & Suzette O. Sasamoto
Grandmother:	Dolores M. Diaz, Rosalia F. Del Rosario
Grandparents In-Law:	Felix A. & Soledad B. Sasamoto
Special Grandparents:	Jose P. & Joan B. Kani, John PC & Annabelle H. Cruz
Special Uncles and Aunts:	Manuel Galagana, Alvin Adriano, Rev. Jose Rodolfo Colendrino, Johnny & Rosa T. Aldan, Albert & Bina Hicking
Godparents:	Ronald A. Ayuyu, Deborah M. Cabrera, Herbert S. Del Rosario
Uncles, Aunts & Cousins:	Rolando & Lita Del Rosario and children, Ricardo & Amy Del Rosario and children, Ronaldo & Mylene Del Rosario and children, Allan & Ening Del Rosario and children, Carleen & Bill Joseph and children, Jeremy & Delight Manalo and children, †Edward L. & Tina C. Villanueva and children, Debra Amalia D. & Vicente Teregeyo and children, Peter & Mina Diaz and children, David & Cathy Diaz &children, Elizabeth C. & †Roy Cruz and children
Maternal Grand Uncles/Aunts:	Teresita DLG. Hudson and children, Trinidad M. Babauta and children, Teresita R. Manalo and children, Ignacio A. Manalo and children, Roberto & Elizabeth Manalo and children, Marilyn D. Manalo and children, Pedro & Bernadita Manalo and children, Juan & Carmen Diaz and children, Isabel & Luis Cabrera and children, Maria & David Rios and children, Celina D. Taylor and children, Carmen D. & Charles Crites and children, Bernice P. Diaz and children, Josie Diaz and children
Special Buddies:	EJay Castro, Mark Manaluz, Herman Herbert D. Del Rosario Jr., Gerald Matanona, Sean Rutledge, Dan Angelo Bicera, Elbert Espayos, Kono Remeliik, I-294 Infantry Bravo Company

He will also be truly missed by his cousins, goddaughter, nieces, nephews, Garapan Elem. School, staff and students, the Guam Army National Guard Battalion

Mass of Intention is offered at 6:00PM at San Antonio Church except on Thursday, January 01, Mass will be offered at 9:00AM.

On Friday, January 02, 2015, our beloved †Chris will be escorted to Mt. Carmel Cathedral at 8:30 for Responso and last respects. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00AM followed by Interment Service at the Veteran's Memorial Cemetery in Marpi with full military honors from the Guam Army National Guard.

Your thoughts, presence and prayers are deeply appreciated.

Thank you, Un dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Maraming Salamat Po.

Svetlana S. Del Rosario & Children
Velma and Henry Del Rosario, Children and Family

The AP's top 10 movies of the year

AP

This image released by Fox Searchlight shows Ralph Fiennes, left, and Tony Revolori in "The Grand Budapest Hotel ."

The top 10 films of 2014, according to AP Film Writer Jake Coyle:

1 "**Ida**"—Where did this perfect little gem come from? Its director, Pawel Pawlikowski, wasn't previously a major name in international cinema. Yet at a time when most filmmakers can't keep their movies under two hours, Pawlikowksi plunges into Polish history and back again in less than 90 minutes. Yes, an austere, black-and-white Polish film doesn't sound like the most appetizing stuff. But it's a hauntingly beautiful film, and thanks to the tremendous Agata Kulesza, there's humor here, too.

2 "**Boyhood**"—One of the most memorable parts of film in 2014 was seeing the movies play with time, capturing it in elapse ("Boyhood"), bending its particles ("Interstellar") and wryly gazing at its courses across centuries (Jim Jarmusch's excellent "Only Lovers Left Alive"). Richard Linklater's 12-years-in-the-making "Boyhood" is a landmark, for sure. But for a much-lauded masterpiece, it's incredibly humble, warm and humanistic.

3 "**The Grand Budapest Hotel**"—Wes Anderson's heroes are, like him, devotees of brilliant escapes: the beachside oasis of "Moonrise Kingdom," the play land of Rushmore Academy, the prewar elegance of this film's Eastern European resort. Dreams are inevitably punctured by outside forces, and a new, compromised life must be found—some melancholy combination of fantasy and reality. Usually, Bill Murray's there somewhere.

4 "**Mr. Turner" and "Birdman**"—In a year rich with colorful portraits of artists (the obsessive, rigorous drummer of "Whiplash," the arrogant, oblivious author of "Listen Up Philip") these two most stood out: "Birdman" for its blisteringly kinetic flow and the raging ego of Michael Keaton's actor; and the masterful "Mr. Turner" for its total lack of pretention and Timothy Spall's gruff, grunting painter.

5 "**Interstellar**"—Admittedly, I'm a sucker when it comes to stories about dads and daughters. Many critics poked holes in the imperfectly stitched cosmic fabric of Christopher Nolan's space epic, but I found the time-traveling epic—science fiction built on science fact—grandly moving. So I'm a sentimentalist who digs space. Sue me.

6 "**Inherent Vice**"—Obviously, I'm also an easy mark for a glorious mess. Paul Thomas Anderson's adaption of Thomas Pynchon is probably a noble failure in an impossible task. But there's no movie I'm keener to return to, to again feel its electric songs and its scruffy sadness.

7 "**The Immigrant**"—A number of films in 2014 weren't shy about their Big American Themes. Bennett Miller's "Foxcatcher" was the most mesmerizing; JC Chandor's "A Most Violent Year" the most atmospheric; and Clint Eastwood's "American Sniper" the tautest. But James Gray's period Ellis Island tale was the most majestic. The film's powerful last shot is an absolute knock out.

8 "**Under the Skin**"—Equal parts beautiful and terrifying in its alien mystery, Jonathan Glazer's extraterrestrial shocker (with Scarlett Johansson as the other-worldly being that touches down in, of all places, Glasgow) made for a searing cinematic experience of sound and imagery.

9 "**Leviathan**"—There's a stout Russian muscularity to Andrey Zvyagintsev's bleak, Job-like tale of corruption in a coastal Russian town. A framed portrait of Vladimir Putin above the police chief looms large.

10 "**Starred Up**"—Four walls, a father and a son, plus a whole lot of violent rage. The ingredients of this British prison drama are simple, but its force is ferocious. In one of the more remarkable father-son dramas you'll see (a young punk gets locked up in the same facility as his dad), Jack O'Connell (the star of Angelina Jolie's "Unbroken") dramatically arrives. But the movie's also a reminder that there's no more riveting actor in movies than Ben Mendelsohn, who plays the father.

Also just as good: "Two Days, One Night," ''The Babadook," ''Selma," ''Ernest & Celestine," ''Locke," ''Citizenfour," ''Stranger By the Lake," ''Dear White People," ''Timbuktu," ''The Trip to Italy" and "Neighbors."

■■■

The top 10 films of 2014, according to AP National Writer Jocelyn Noveck:

1 "**Boyhood**"—This movie just pulsates with the feeling that it's something utterly unique—something rare and exciting. It's not just that director Richard Linklater managed to shoot it over 12 years, creating an astonishingly fluid view of a boy's life; It's how the film makes us FEEL. By the end, we know Mason (the sensitive Ellar Coltrane) so well, it feels wrong to leave him. Shouldn't he be coming home with us?

2 "**Birdman**"—Absolutely bracing in its verve and inventiveness, Alejandro G. Inarritu's meditation on fame, relevance and self-worth is a marvel. Michael Keaton is raw and vulnerable as an aging actor trying to exorcise his superhero past; Edward Norton is superb as a charismatic jerk. The cherry on top: Emmanuel Lubezki's stunningly seamless camera work.

3 "**Selma**"—Talk about a movie that comes just when the country needs it. A beautifully restrained performance by David Oyelowo as Martin Luther King, Jr. anchors this stirring account of events surrounding the famous march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery. Director Ava DuVernay is equally adept at depicting intimate moments—like a testy Oval Office exchange between LBJ and George Wallace—as she is conveying the sweep of a historic movement.

4 "**Ida**"—Pawel Pawlikowski's film is pure, austere, and powerful—exactly how one might describe its young star, Agata Trzebuchowska, who plays an orphaned novice about to take her vows when she learns she has an aunt, her only living relative. Ida's subsequent journey, in which she explores Poland's dark wartime past to discover both who she is and who she wants to be, is mesmerizing.

5 "**Mr. Turner**"—Timothy Spall studied painting, drawing, even Greek and Roman architecture—all to play the great landscape painter J.M.W. Turner. And it shows: The wonderfully gruff Spall doesn't seem to act in this movie as much as inhabit it, messily and fully. Mike Leigh's gorgeously detailed biopic doesn't fall into typical formula—and the visuals do Turner proud.

6 "**The Grand Budapest Hotel**"—Wes Anderson, we surrender—to your whimsy and singular imagination. This movie is a visual delight; it's also a madcap caper and, a layer deeper, a more serious look at a dying way of life in Europe. Mostly, it's a perfect vehicle for Ralph Fiennes, as a wonderfully pompous concierge, to display his lesser-known comic skills.

7 "**Whiplash**"—None of us would ever want to be in a classroom with the abusively demanding jazz instructor played by J.K. Simmons—it's hard enough to be in the movie theater. But boy, Simmons grabs the role by the throat, thrillingly. Miles Teller is excellent, too, as the driven student who accepts this abuse, all to be a jazz drummer.

8 "**The Theory of Everything**," "**The Imitation Game**"—Both are biopics that feel somewhat formulaic, but both feature lead performances that must be seen. Eddie Redmayne is remarkably effective as Stephen Hawking, eventually using only his eyes and a crooked smile to express what's inside a blazing mind. Benedict Cumberbatch's nervous energy is perfect for the role of Alan Turing, the mathematician who cracked the Germans' Enigma code.

9 "**Foxcatcher**"—Grim and unrelenting but expertly rendered, this real-life tale of the Olympic wrestling Schultz brothers and benefactor John DuPont is worth seeing both for the shocking story and the acting. Steve Carell makes a striking physical transformation, but it's his reedy voice that'll really creep you out. Mark Ruffalo, the more nurturing brother, and Channing Tatum, the more troubled, are just as compelling.

10 "**Still Alice**," "**Get on Up**"—Two more films to mention because of stellar central performances: As an early-onset Alzheimer's patient, Julianne Moore is sensitive, warm, heartbreaking—and deserves all the awards buzz she's getting. In "Get On Up," Chadwick Boseman is truly galvanizing as James Brown—and deserves way more buzz than HE'S getting.

Honorable mentions: "Only Lovers Left Alive," ''Locke," ''Interstellar," ''American Sniper," ''Into the Woods."

Deaths and sex allegations rock the comedy world

NEW YORK (AP)—For comedians, there was very little to laugh about in 2014.

Three pioneering comic legends died—David Brenner, Joan Rivers and Robin Williams—and Bill Cosby went from America's dad to an alleged serial sexual predator.

"It's unfortunate when you lose anybody. To lose three and to have these allegations with Cosby, it's a tough year," said Christopher Mazzilli, co-owner of the Gotham Comedy Club.

The year began with exciting late-night transitions for Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers, but soon started on a litany of loss, beginning with the death in March of the lanky, toothy-grinned Brenner, whose brand of observational comedy paved the way for Jerry Seinfeld and Paul Reiser.

Then Williams, who inspired and supported so many comedians with a legacy that included "Mork and Mindy" on TV and films like "Mrs. Doubtfire" and "Dead Poets Society," committed suicide in August.

By fall, Rivers, whose brassy style was picked up by Sarah Silverman, Chelsea Handler and Kathy Griffin, had also died. Others lost this year include stand-up comedian John Pinette and "SNL" veteran Jan Hooks. In New York magazine, Chris Rock called 2014 "a weird year for comedy" and many agree.

"It's been a brutal year for losing funny people," said Kelly Carlin, daughter of comedic-legend George Carlin and a performer in her own right. "It feels like comedy is teaching us what it feels like to walk through loss this year."

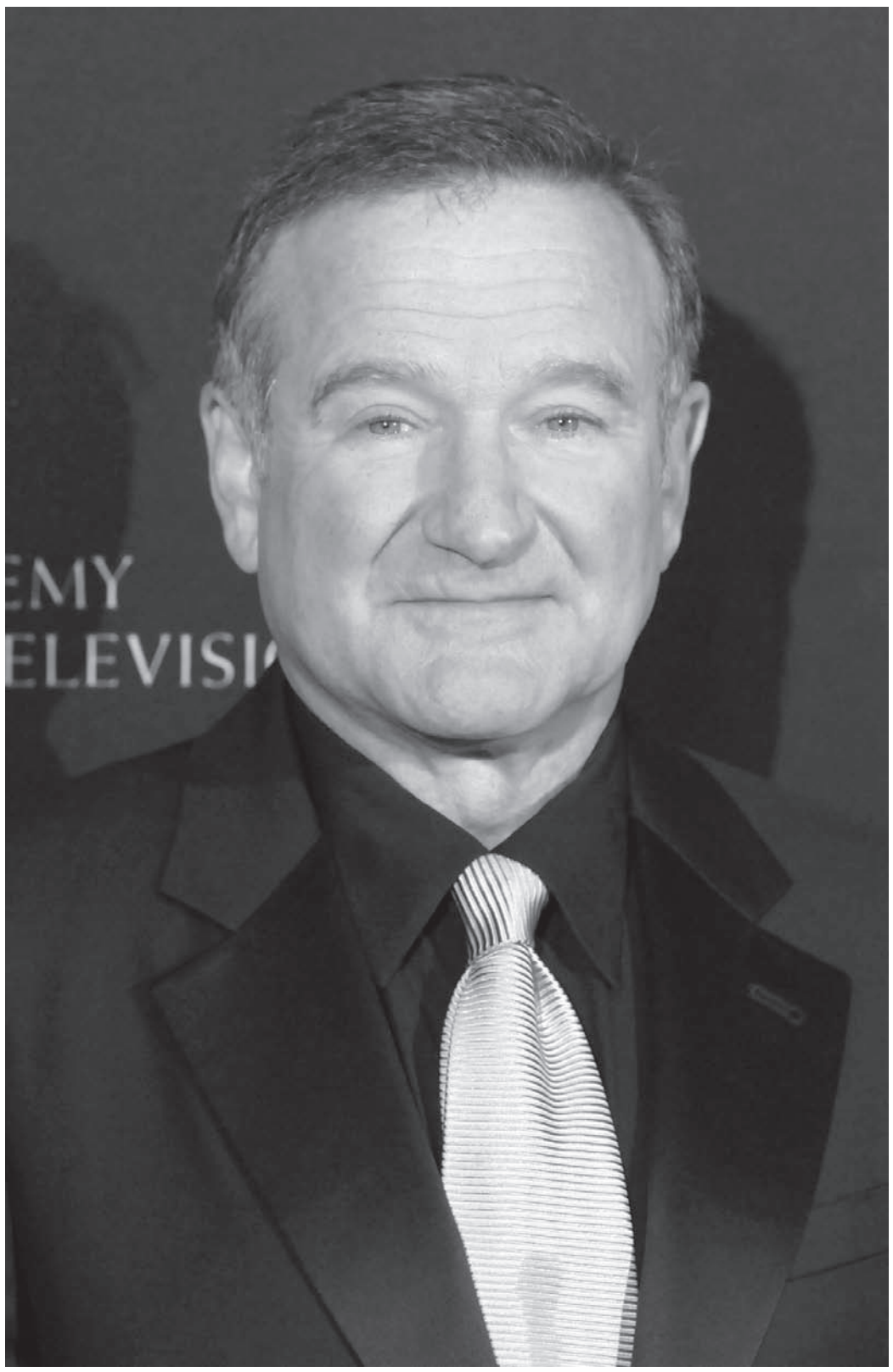
Paul Provenza, a veteran stand-up, TV host and director of the film "The Aristocrats," said the losses of Brenner, Williams and Rivers hit hard because they each invented unique styles of joke-telling.

"They created new languages in comedy," he said. "They basically created these pathways and these styles of comedy and made them the vernacular."

This year also saw the re-flaring of accusations—and quick denials—of child molestation allegations against Woody Allen. They cast a shadow over his film "Magic in the Moonlight" and his Broadway musical "Bullets Over Broadway."

The world of humor was also knocked off-balance by the renewed allegations against Cosby by more than 15 women claiming decades-old sexual assaults. He has denied some of the allegations, but his career has suffered.

"I feel like we've lost Bill Cosby," said Carlin. "I feel like there's some sort of erasure happening on the Mount Rushmore of comedy right now, with his face being sandblasted away in some ways."



AP

In this Nov. 30, 2011 file photo, actor Robin Williams arrives at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Los Angeles Britannia Awards in Beverly Hills, Calif. For comedians, there was very little to laugh about in 2014. Three pioneering comic legends died - David Brenner, Joan Rivers and Williams.

Provenza said he's deeply saddened by the allegations against Cosby and horrified by the accusations, but tells people who ask about it to always trust the art, not the artist.

"I just hope that through all of this—whatever the realities are and however this plays out—I hope that people still can trust the art because the man was an absolute genius in stand-up," Provenza said.

Eddie Izzard, the British actor and comedian who is filming Sony PlayStation Network's original series "Powers," said the Cosby allegations reminded him of accusations that have rocked England about TV personalities there linked to abuses against young girls.

Of Cosby, Izzard said: "If it's true, then, 'Oh my God.' And if it's not true, then, 'Oh my God.' I don't know where you go with either of those," he said. "There's negativity happening this year but comedians are going out and doing really interesting stuff all around the world."

Provenza said the sad news in 2014 from the comedy world is a reminder that while comedians might be funny, they're also just people, with all the anger, weirdness and sadness that entails.

"It's all very human. We're all in the same place, whether you're a pipefitter or a school teacher or a doctor or a lawyer or a comedian, the human condition is the human condition," he said. "And nobody escapes that."

Despite the heavy losses, comedians said there's still plenty of exciting comedy on TV, online and at stand-up shows, from shows like "Inside Amy Schumer" to "Key & Peele" to sketch groups like Friends of the People to web sites like Funny or Die and Marc Maron's podcasts.

Mazzilli, whose club has helped launch the careers of Dave Chapelle and Colin Quinn, points to the Internet as becoming comedy's fuel, giving once-unknowns like Jeff Dunham the ability to go viral.

"I thought it was high-tech when we had faxes and I could fax somebody the information," he said. "Now people can reach—with a couple of words and pushing a button—a million people, two million people. Immediately."

Thanks to the Internet and social media, Provenza, who has been doing stand-up since the late 1970s, said he believes we're now in a new golden age: "In all those decades, I have never seen as exciting a time in comedy as there is now."

Carlin agreed, and celebrates the return of comedians playing a big role in national conversations. She points to such comics as Stephen Colbert, Jon Stewart, Patton Oswalt, John Oliver, Louis C.K, Chris Rock, Russell Brand, Lewis Black and Doug Stanhope.

"Comedians are once again the leading social commentators," she said.

Daughter's baby-sitting leads to another baby

DEAR ABBY: My 16-year-old daughter, "Sierra," started baby-sitting in the afternoons for a couple when she was 15. Sometimes her dad or I would drop her off; sometimes the husband, "Karl," would before he left for work. My husband and Karl became friends, and when Karl and his wife split up, we let him stay on our couch for a few months.

Then we found out Sierra was pregnant and that she and Karl had been sleeping together before he split with his wife. My daughter is upset that we want to involve the police and press charges because she was underage. How can I get Sierra to stop hating me and understand that this relationship isn't healthy?

"THE ENEMY MOM" IN SOUTH CAROLINA

DEAR "ENEMY MOM": Sierra is mad at you because you are injecting an unwelcome note of reality into her fantasy of "love." Karl is a predator who needs to be answerable for what he did. He will also have to support that child until he or she is no longer a minor. Because he has shown himself to be amoral and irresponsible, involve not only the police but also the department of social services to ensure that he lives up to all of his responsibilities.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: It was brought to my attention that an employee in my workplace was asked by his supervisor if he would be OK with working with a gay male before the person was interviewed. Is this even legal? She basically "outed" the potential employee in the workplace.

If the person she asked did have a problem working with someone who's gay, it implies the man wouldn't have been hired, which would be discrimination, wouldn't it? Couldn't that lead to a possible lawsuit? Or am I wrong?

RIGHT OR WRONG IN WISCONSIN

DEAR RIGHT OR WRONG: I discussed your question with an attorney from Lambda Legal, the national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of LGBT people. Currently, 21 states plus the District of Columbia have laws that protect gay people from employment discrimination. Wisconsin is one of them.

The attorney said that "outing" the candidate to the other employee was "not necessarily illegal," but that it was "DEFINITELY a bad business practice."

In the 21 states that offer protection for gay people, a prospective employer cannot base a hiring decision on how comfortable someone is with the candidate's sexual orientation, or the perception that a co-worker or customer might be uncomfortable with a gay person. That is discrimination, and it IS illegal.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

■ ■ ■

DEAR READERS: The year is almost over—I can't believe how fast it has gone! Please accept my heartfelt wish for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2015. And if you are partying this evening, please be safe!—LOVE, ABBY

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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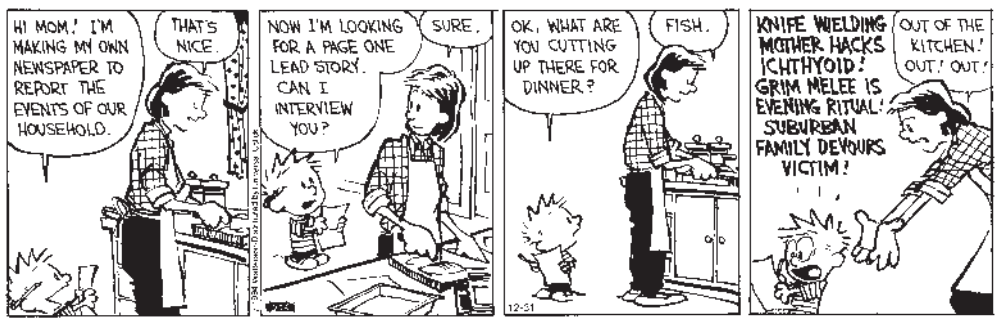
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

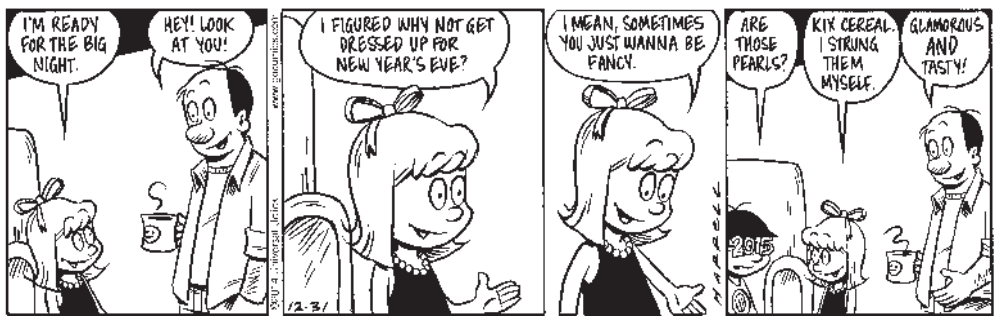

HI MOM! I'M MAKING MY OWN NEWSPAPER TO REPORT THE EVENTS OF OUR HOUSEHOLD.
THAT'S NICE.
NOW I'M LOOKING FOR A PAGE ONE LEAD STORY. CAN I INTERVIEW YOU?
SURE.
OK, WHAT ARE YOU CUTTING UP THERE FOR DINNER?
FISH.
KNIFE WIELDING MOTHER HACKS ICHTHYOID! GRIM MELEE IS EVENING RITUAL! SUBURBAN FAMILY DEVOURS VICTIM!
OUT OF THE KITCHEN! OUT! OUT!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I'M READY FOR THE BIG NIGHT.
HEY! LOOK AT YOU!
I FIGURED WHY NOT GET DRESSED UP FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE?
I MEAN, SOMETIMES YOU JUST WANNA BE FANCY.
ARE THOSE PEARLS?
KIX CEREAL. I STRUNG THEM MYSELF.
GLAMOROUS AND TASTY!
2015

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT ARE YOU WRITING?
YOUR LIST OF NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS.
YOU'RE NO LONGER ALLOWED TO EAT FRIED FOODS, CAFFEINE OR RICH DESSERTS.
WHY?
BECAUSE MY DOCTOR SAYS I'M NOT ALLOWED TO HAVE THEM.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Basinger and Novak
5 Piercing tool
8 Sicilian volcano
12 Great Lake
13 West of Hollywood
14 Tale-teller
15 Item from a traveler
17 Send forth
18 Hardly a compliment
19 With resolute spirit
21 "The Raven" writer
22 A util.
23 Dict. info
26 Pair
28 Play charades
31 Like
33 Genetic stuff
35 Verifiable
36 Pie-in-the-face sound
38 Recede
40 Lair
41 Eastern potentate
43 Blue
45 Star of "S1m0ne"
47 Syrian city
51 Verve
52 Joker
54 Traditional tales
55 Green, in a way
56 Newspaper pg.
57 ATF employees
58 Rep.'s opponent
59 Knocks

DOWN
1 Military cap
2 Press
3 Fail to hit
4 Arrangement
5 Hobbyist, perhaps
6 Kids' card game
7 Sill
8 Periodic Table entry
9 It gets punched
10 Hammer target
11 Bohemian
16 Lummox
20 Heady quaff
23 "— Kapital"
24 Kreskin's claim
25 3x5, e.g.
27 Inseparable
29 Shuffleboard stick
30 Scale maximum, often
32 Feasts' antitheses
34 David's rebellious son
37 Can material
39 Lacking locks
42 Emulated Michael of song
44 Interior design
45 Money
46 Burn aid
48 One of the Three Bears
49 Get ready quickly?
50 Probability
53 Lemieux milieu

Solution time: 24 mins.

A	G	R	A	■	T	H	Y	■	E	A	C	H
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E	L	E	C	T	I	O	N	■	T	E	V	P
M	A	N	■	E	C	K	■	P	O	S	S	E
■	■	■	E	N	D	■	H	I	H	■	■	■
I	W	I	X	I	■	L	A	C	I	E	A	L
S	Y	N	C	■	B	O	Y	■	I	O	W	A
P	E	S	E	T	A	S	■	Z	O	N	E	D
■	■	■	P	E	G	■	S	I	N	■	■	■
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■	O	D	I	■	E	V	I	C	T	I	O	N
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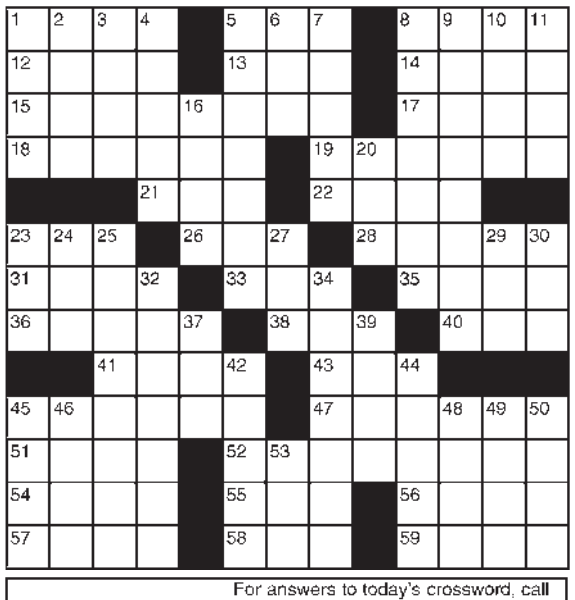
P	E	N	N	■	O	N	E	■	M	E	E	T

Yesterday's answer 12-31



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Gabrielle Douglas, 19; Psy, 37; Joey McIntyre, 42; Anthony Hopkins, 77.

Happy Birthday: Good fortune can be yours if you head into this year with determination and dedication. Don't allow pressure from others to cause you to make a hasty decision. Base everything you do on facts and practicality and you will come out ahead eventually. A steady pace and controlled emotions will counter financial temptations. Stability should overrule excessiveness. Your numbers are 9, 13, 20, 22, 28, 37, 49.

ARIES (*March 21-Apluril 19*): Don't make waves with your peers. Celebrate with family, a lover or good friends who will look out for you. Initiate plans, but let everyone contribute in their own way. Keeping the peace will ensure a happy start to the year. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Take control of your life. Check out your options and follow through by researching the interests, places and people you want to pursue in the upcoming months. Emotions and indulgence must not lead to a costly mishap. Romance is highlighted. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't put limits on what you can accomplish. Instead of going out and risking getting into trouble, celebrate New Year's at home with friends and loved ones. Don't reveal personal secrets. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Call up people you want to connect with before the year comes to a close. Checking in with someone you have worked with in the past will spark an idea or proposal that can benefit you in the new year. Avoid unpredictable situations. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Have fun and create an atmosphere that will allow others to enjoy your entertaining personality. Unfamiliar places will spark enthusiasm and add to your excitement in the new year. Get ready to initiate your resolution immediately. ✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Put the past behind you, lighten up and have fun. Love is on the rise, and sharing your feelings is an excellent way to end one year and begin another. Set your goals high and you will improve your standard of living. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Avoid any sort of debate or controversial topic that can ruin your plans or your evening. Focus on lively entertainment and sticking close to the people you know have your back. Live, love, laugh and be happy. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Remember and re-evaluate the year gone by. Plan the alterations you want to put into play and discuss your decisions with anyone affected by the choices you make. Taking a unique approach to life, love and prosperity will pay off. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): You'll be eager to take off on a new adventure. Whether it's a night out on the town or a new place to hang your hat, you will entertain others with generosity and goodwill for the new year. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Let go of the past as you move into the future. Hold on tightly to what is near and dear to you, and dispense with anything that is holding you back or weighing you down. Work on easing your stress and toast to new beginnings. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Keep tabs on your intake. Moderation will be necessary if you want to avoid an emotional situation that can hinder your future. Plan to put your resolution into effect prior to ringing in the new year. ✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Mingle with people who can help you get ahead or offer you insight or favors. Good fortune can be yours if you are ready to minimize your overhead and maximize your skills, experience and knowledge. 4 stars

Birthday Baby: You are open, determined and forthright. You have discipline and drive.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	5	9	6				1	3
		8	4	7		6	5	
				5		7		
			1	8	7			
		1				9		
6	3		9				8	
9							2	
	8	6	7				4	
			2	3			6	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/31

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

4	8	7	3	6	1	9	2	5
6	3	2	9	7	5	8	1	4
9	5	1	2	4	8	7	6	3
7	4	6	8	2	3	5	9	1
8	1	3	4	5	9	6	7	2
5	2	9	7	1	6	3	4	8
2	6	4	5	3	7	1	8	9
3	7	8	1	9	4	2	5	6
1	9	5	6	8	2	4	3	7

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/31

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

OFFICE SUPPLIES Solution: 7 letters

X	R	E	T	H	G	I	L	H	G	I	H	E	L	P
S	E	E	N	O	H	P	C	S	S	L	E	B	A	L
R	B	D	L	O	A	D	E	H	C	S	G	L	U	E
E	O	A	O	U	B	I	P	A	A	U	K	S	E	D
K	A	C	T	L	R	B	R	E	D	I	T	T	D	G
R	R	E	A	E	O	T	I	A	Y	B	R	T	A	E
A	D	N	T	L	R	R	Y	R	S	A	M	Ⓢ	E	R
M	S	T	C	I	E	P	E	E	S	S	E	Ⓓ	H	R
P	A	E	D	L	L	N	P	H	E	K	S	Ⓐ	R	E
B	M	G	P	A	O	O	D	L	C	E	S	Ⓟ	E	N
I	E	A	N	I	L	C	P	A	T	T	A	A	T	E
P	T	N	T	E	W	A	K	O	R	A	G	P	T	T
S	E	A	V	S	T	O	N	E	R	C	E	E	E	S
R	T	N	P	S	L	S	C	O	R	K	S	R	L	A
S	E	S	S	E	N	I	S	U	B	S	E	L	I	F

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Yesterday's Answer: Funny

Treasury 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 or 19 can be purchased on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (Contain 130 puzzles.)

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Attorney for Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

ISLA FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.,	)	CIVIL ACTION NO.: 14-0206
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	**SUMMONS (For Publication)**
FRANCES C. QUICHOCHO	)	
Defendant.	)	

TO: FRANCES C. QUICHOCHO

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file with the Superior Court any Answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is given to you herewith, within twenty-one (21) days after the fourth publication, and to deliver or mail a copy of your Answer to the Law Offices of S. Joshua Berger, Plaintiff's attorney, whose address is Second Floor, D'Torres Building, Garapan, P. O. Box 504340, Saipan, MP 96950, as soon as practicable after filing your Answer.

Your Answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan. It may be prepared and signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice.

If you fail to answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

By Order of the above Court:

DATED: November 18, 2014

/s/ Adelpha Kapileo
CLERK OF COURT

Third Publication

Nerissa C. Benavente
P.O. Box 5698 CHRB
Saipan, MP 96950
(670) 234-7218

PRO SE

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN RE THE MATTER OF THE APPOINTMENT OF	)	FCD GU CIVIL ACTION NO. 14-0558
AS GUARDIAN OF THE ESTATE OF Jaeleen Naomi Benavente Aldan 9/24/2001 (d.o.b.) Minor Child By NERRISA C. BENAVENTE	)	**NOTICE OF HEARING**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a Petition for Appointment of Guardian for the estate of the above-named minor child by NERISSA C. BENAVENTE, Petitioner, was filed with the above-entitled Honorable Court.

A HEARING of said petition for Guardianship will be held at the above-entitled Honorable Court at Superior Court before Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo on the 15th day of January, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. or as soon thereafter.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/ Deputy Clerk of Court

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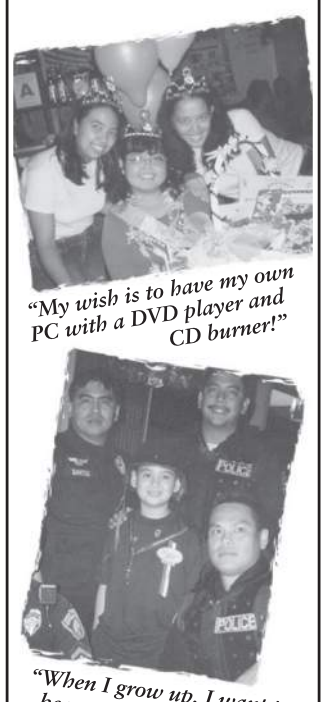

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Saipan Tribune

COMMONWEALTH CASINO COMMISSION

PO Box 500135 Saipan MP 96950

EXAMINATION ANNOUNCEMENT NO. CCC-14-001
OPENING DATE: 12/24/14
CLOSING DATE: 01/07/15

This examination is for the purpose of developing an Open Competitive and Promotional Eligibility list. It is the policy of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands that the personnel system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

POSITION AND SALARY: ***EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR***

Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience.

LOCATION: Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

POSITION SUMMARY

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration of the Commonwealth Casino Commission (the "Commission" or "CCC"). The Executive Director ensures that the Commission exercises its authority in compliance with Public Law 18-56 and other Commonwealth laws, Agreements, Rules and Regulations. He/She will be responsible for directing and managing the regulatory activities of the Commission to ensure the gaming industry performs in compliance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Casino Act of 2014 (Public Law 18-56) as well as industry best practices. The Executive Director reports to and is supervised by the Commission.

Note: This job posting is intended to describe the general nature and level of work to be performed by the assigned person. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, skills or working conditions.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION

Pursuant to CNMI Public Law 18-56 § 2315

- A Bachelor's Degree from a United States accredited educational institution or equivalent
- Five (5) years work experience in professional, administrative or management in government or private sectors
- Good ethical and moral character
- Must posses a clean criminal history and must not have been convicted of any crime in any jurisdiction of the United States, or any foreign country carrying a minimum sentence of imprisonment of more than six months, excepting traffic offence
- Must not have any interest, directly or indirectly, in any business under the jurisdiction of the Commission

MINIMUM BACKGROUND REQUIREMENTS

Applicant must submit to and pass background screen, including, but not limited to drug and criminal record investigation. Certain information discovered could result in ineligibility for employment with the Commonwealth Casino Commission. The Commission will require a personal financial disclosure prior to making a final decision.

Applicant must be a US Citizen or US Permanent Resident. CNMI Government Excepted Service benefits will apply.

INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS SHOULD REQUEST A COPY OF THE COMPLETE JOB DESCRIPTION.

CONTACT PERSON:
Ruth Ann P. Sakisat
Commonwealth Casino Commission
C/O The Office of the Governor, 1st Floor
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Saipan MP 96950
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Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

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Plumlee leads Nets over Kings, 107-99

NEW YORK (AP)—Mason Plumlee continued his impressive play with a team-high 22 points, Joe Johnson and Jarret Jack each scored 16, and the Brooklyn Nets held on to beat the Sacramento Kings 107-99 on Monday night.

Rudy Gay had 25 points and DeMarcus Cousins added 24 points and 13 rebounds for the Kings, who've lost 13 of their last 17 games.

Brook Lopez came off the bench and chipped in 11 points for the Nets, who bounced back from a 25-point loss to Indiana on Saturday night at Barclays Center and won for the fourth time in their last five games.

The Nets led 93-83 with 5:53 left in the fourth quarter after a layup by Deron Williams, but Gay then scored five straight points in a 26-second span, including a 3-pointer, that cut the lead to 93-88 with 5:12 to play.

Reserve forward Mirza Teletovic led an 8-2 run with a pair of 3-pointers and Plumlee scored on a layup that increased Brooklyn's lead to 101-90 with 3:29 to go. After a Sacramento timeout, Cousins' thunderous dunk reduced the deficit to 101-92 before Plumlee answered with a dunk of his own that made it 103-92.

Collison then scored five straight points, including a 3-pointer and a pair of free throws after Teletovic fouled him on a 3-point attempt, cutting the lead to 103-97 with 43.6 seconds left. But Jack and Johnson combined to hit four straight free throws that put the game out of reach for the Kings.

AP
Sacramento Kings' DeMarcus Cousins (15) defends Brooklyn Nets' Mason Plumlee (1) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Dec. 29, 2014, in New York.

Clippers 101, Jazz 97

In Los Angeles, Blake Griffin scored 24 points and Los Angeles beat Utah for its 12th straight victory over the Jazz, breaking the franchise record for consecutive losses against one club.

Chris Paul finished with 20 points and eight assists.

DeAndre Jordan had 19 rebounds for the two-time defending Pacific Division champions. The Clippers blocked 12 shots and never trailed in the fourth quarter despite leading by no more than five points at any point.

The previous franchise record for wins by the Clippers against one team was set against the Dallas Mavericks.

The Clippers are 10-6 in December with one game left.

Gordon Hayward scored 22 points for the Jazz and Rudy Gobert added 13 rebounds and 11 points off the bench. Shooting guard Alec Burks missed his second straight game because of chronic soreness in his left shoulder. He also sat out two games early this month for the same reason.

Magic 102, Heat 101

In Miami, Nikola Vucevic scored 26 points, Victor Oladipo scored seven of his 22 in the final minutes and Orlando beat Miami.

Oladipo had a layup to tie it, then a free throw to put the Magic ahead to stay and give them their first win against Miami in 11 tries.

Tobias Harris scored 18 for the Magic, who got 13 from Channing Frye.

Dwyane Wade scored 25 points for Miami, which has lost 12 of 18 at home. Danny Granger had 21 points and Chris Bosh scored 20 in his return after missing eight games with a strained left calf.

Granger was 6 for 7 from 3-point range, including one that put Miami up 101-97 with 1:38 left. The Heat didn't score again.

There were nine lead changes and four ties in the fourth quarter, with the Magic knotting the game at 101-all when Oladipo drove by Wade and scored with 45 seconds left.

Bucks 104, Hornets 94, OT

In Charlotte, N.C., Brandon Knight scored 18 points, including a layup to force overtime, and Milwaukee pulled away to beat Charlotte.

Jared Dudley scored 17 points, Giannis Antetokounm had 16, Zaza Pachulia had 15, O.J. Mayo had 13 and John Henson added 11 for the Bucks (16-16), who snapped a seven-game losing streak to the Hornets dating back to the 2011-2012 season.

Kemba Walker scored 28 points, Gerald Henderson added 19 and Michael Kidd-Gilchrist scored 10 for the Hornets (10-22), who fought back from a 21-point deficit in the first half.

Walker's layup with 54.5 seconds remaining gave Charlotte an 83-81 lead, but Knight followed up his own blocked shot for a layup with 16 seconds left to tie the score and force overtime.

Milwaukee then pulled ahead for good on Henson's three-point play with 3:51 left in overtime. The Bucks led by 13 points in the extra period.

Bulls 92, Pacers 90

In Indianapolis, Jimmy Butler had 27 points and nine rebounds to lead Chicago to a victory over Indiana.

Pau Gasol had 20 points and Derrick Rose added 17 for the Bulls (22-9), who have won seven straight.

Chris Copeland scored 13 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter, and George Hill and C.J. Miles each added 11 points for the Pacers (11-21), who trailed by as much as 21 points in the second half.

Butler scored a 3-pointer with 1:07 remaining to put the Bulls ahead for good 92-90.

That was after the Pacers went on a 23-2 run and regained the lead on Lavoy Allen's basket to make it 84-83 with 6:15 left in the fourth quarter.

Chicago tied the four-game season series with the Pacers at 1-1 and won for the first time at Indiana after losing the previous four games.

Wizards 104, Rockets 103

In Houston, Bradley Beal scored 33 points and Paul Pierce added 21, and Washington survived a furious fourth-quarter charge by Houston to beat the Rockets.

Nene added 12 points to go with five rebounds, and John Wall racked up 12 assists to go with 13 points for Washington, which won its third straight to open a five-game road trip.

James Harden scored 33 points—including a 3-pointer with under a second to go in regulation to get Houston within a point—and Corey Brewer added 15 from the bench for the Rockets.

Houston outscored the Wizards on second-chance points (18-9) and points in the paint (50-34) but was plagued by poor shooting. Washington had no such issues, shooting nearly 93 percent from the free-throw line and 44.4 percent from beyond the arc.

Masters races to keep field under 100 players

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER

Here's a new tradition unlike any other—the race to see if the Masters can keep its field under 100 players by April.

For the fourth time in the last five years, at least 90 players already have qualified for the Masters at the end of the year with three months of opportunities remaining before the field is set. Each time, Augusta National managed to achieve its objective of keeping the number of competitors in double digits.

By far the smallest field of the four majors, the Masters has not had more than 100 players since 1966.

That's what Augusta National prefers. Club chairmen have talked about a small field creating a better experience. Remember, the original name of the Masters was the Augusta National Invitation Tournament.

But if the last eight months were any indication, this could be the closest call yet.

Of the 90 players who are eligible and expected to compete, 17 earned invitations by winning PGA Tour events that award full FedEx Cup points. That's up from 12 a year ago, a reminder not only that winning is difficult for everyone but that the PGA Tour is stronger and deeper than ever.

There are 13 chances for players not already in the Masters to win a full PGA Tour event and get in. And because the Match Play Championship has been moved from its traditional late February slot, top international players such as Rory McIlroy, Henrik Stenson and Adam Scott are not expected to play much (if at all) before the Florida swing.

The other way to qualify is to move into the top 50 in the world ranking published on March 30. Among those on the outside is Brandt Snedeker (No. 58) from the PGA Tour. Tommy Fleetwood (51), Alexander Levy (53) and Francesco Molinari (55) are also outside the top 50, though they will face some of the European Tour's stronger fields during the Middle East swing.

Also, the Masters had created a new spot for the winner of the Latin America Amateur Championship, to be played in January in Argentina.

A year ago, 90 players were eligible after the first cutoff in December. Seven players not already eligible won PGA Tour events, and Stephen Gallacher was added from the world ranking. Then again, one spot was reduced when Tiger Woods had back surgery a week before the Masters.

This year? Stay tuned. It starts with the Tournament of Champions at Kapalua, a field that includes four players who won before last year's Masters—Scott Stallings, Matt Every, Steven Bowditch and Matt Jones—and are not yet eligible at Augusta.

■■■

FALL OPPORTUNITIES: Two years into a wraparound schedule is too soon to analyze trends, though there was one significant change this year.

A year ago, Chris Kirk had the worst world ranking of the six winners in the fall. He was at No. 93 when he won the McGladrey Classic. Dustin Johnson had the highest ranking (No. 23 when he won he HSBC Champions), and the others were scattered in between. Jimmy Walker at the Frys.com Open was the only first-time winner.

This year provided more opportunity.

There were three first-time winners—Ben Martin, Robert Streb and Nick Taylor—among the seven tournaments. The player with the worst ranking? That would be Taylor at the Sanderson Farms Championship (played opposite Shanghai), who checked in at No. 594.

Bae Sang-moon was at No. 195 when he won the Frys.com Open, while Streb was No. 177 before winning at Sea Island.

The best ranking belonged to Bubba Watson, who was No. 7 when he won the World Golf Championship in China.

■■■

SCHEDULE SWAP: It's always good to have solid title sponsors, even better to have sponsors who are flexible.

The European Tour discovered that anew when the Turkish Airlines Open—typically the third of four events in the Race to Dubai final series—ran into problems for 2015. The G20 Summit starts in Turkey on Nov. 15, the same day as the final round of the golf tournament. The Turkish Golf Federation feared it would be exceedingly difficult for the events to clash and asked to change the date.

The BMW Masters in Shanghai—typically the Final Series opener—agreed to swap.

That means the Turkish Airlines Open will be the opening Final Series event, followed by the HSBC Champions in Shanghai and then the BMW Masters. The final event is the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai.

"We are a dedicated partner of golf worldwide, and we were keen to act in the interest of golf," Thorsten Mattig of BMW said.

BMW also sponsors European Tour events in Germany and at Wentworth, along with a FedEx Cup event on the PGA Tour.

■■■

REACHING OUT, GIVING BACK: The PGA Tour already is involved with military outreach with its "Birdies for the Brave" program. It added another layer for 2015 by offering military members complimentary or discounted tickets to its tournaments.

Starting with the Tournament of Champions in Kapalua, the "Birdies for the Brave Military Ticket Program" allows active duty and reserve military members, retired military and their dependents to get free admission to 30 PGA Tour events.

Discounted tickets to other tournaments also will be available to nonretired veterans.

Handful of coaching openings to fill

AP

In this Sunday, Dec. 21, 2014, file photo, New York Jets head coach Rex Ryan, left, and general manager John Idzik watch their team warm up before an NFL football game against the New England Patriots, in East Rutherford, N.J.

NEW YORK (AP)—OK, it is done.

Rex Ryan and John Idzik are out with the Jets. The Bears canned Marc Trestman and Phil Emery. Mike Smith was fired in Atlanta.

It wasn't as bloody as some past Black Mondays, but the ax swung swiftly on them. Throw in the two coaching openings in the Bay Area, and there's plenty of searching ahead for team owners in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and Oakland.

What should they look for and who might fit the bill? Let's look.

NEW YORK JETS

A wise former football writer always stressed that the most important position in pro football is owner. A case in point, he'd say, was this team, which has fallen short in competing with the local rival Giants, whose ownership is considered among the most stable, patient and insightful.

Two years after hiring Idzik, owner Woody Johnson fired him, in great part because the talent level has fallen so precipitously in the GM's short regime. It was Idzik's work in free agency and the draft - of course, Ryan had a hand in those moves, too - that doomed him when the Jets went 4-12 and missed the playoffs for a fourth consecutive year.

New York needs to solve its quarterback woes first, particularly because there is some talent elsewhere on offense. It should seek a head coach or offensive coordinator who has a history of success grooming QBs.

And it should get a GM with experience in the job who can deal with a flighty owner.

ATLANTA FALCONS

Smith's tenure hardly was a flop. His 66 wins in seven seasons are the most for any Falcons coach, including five straight winning seasons; the Falcons never had even two successive winning records before he arrived.

But Arthur Blank, considered one of the better owners in the league, not only saw a 10-22 record in 2013-2014, but the no-show against Carolina on Sunday with the division title on the line.

Living in a weak division gives the Falcons a quicker chance to turn it around, but they need a running game to complement the passing offense, and they need drastic improvement on defense, supposedly Smith's strength.

Blank indicated there could be other changes, and GM Thomas Dimitroff could be in trouble. For now, look for Atlanta to grab someone a bit more fiery who can mend the defense.

Did someone say Rex Ryan? Probably not.

CHICAGO BEARS

This one is a total mess, in some ways similar to the Jets' situation. The biggest issue is leadership, and that permeates the entire organization.

Emery committing to quarterback Jay Cutler for seven years and putting the team on the hook for $54 million guaranteed ($36 million remaining) has become an albatross for the organization. The new GM must seek a trading partner—highly unlikely—interested in a volatile player with a huge cap number and a history of underachievement.

Or that general manager, who likely will need to work some salary cap magic, might have to swallow hard and keep Cutler.

So the new coach, same as the old coach, had better be a QB guru, and one who rules with more of an iron fist than did Trestman.

OAKLAND RAIDERS

Dennis Allen was fired early in the season, and Tony Sparano managed to win three games with an undertalented team. So many of the free agency moves by GM Reggie McKenzie backfired; that same wise former football writer said McKenzie's signing built a powerhouse for 2009, not for 2014.

Raiders owner Mark Davis would like to make a big splash, and was enamored of the idea of persuading Jim Harbaugh to cross the Bay. Barring that, and with the coordinator promotion route not working since Jon Gruden left, look for Davis to go after a well-known coach who also could get personnel control.

Should he keep McKenzie, Davis might even turn to the fiery Ryan to inspire a dispassionate bunch.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

The jewel of the open jobs, although some might wonder why if a coach such as Harbaugh couldn't stick it out there with so much success during his tenure. Given the discord that helped ruin a talented team's season—as did injuries—GM Trent Baalke and CEO Jed York might be in the market for someone less independent.

For continuity, the Niners could opt for promoting popular line coach Jim Tomsula, a loyal soldier.

And, sorry to sound like a broken record, but whoever takes over must reverse the regression of the quarterback, Colin Kaepernick.

SIDEBAR

Manziel rues conduct: 'I've done this to myself'

BEREA, Ohio (AP)—Johnny Manziel says the party's over. The Browns want to believe him.

The high-profile rookie quarterback apologized to his Browns teammates—and Cleveland fans—Monday for a season of distractions and vowed again to change.

Manziel was fined over the weekend by the team after he missed a medical treatment for a hamstring injury. Manziel said he overslept, but denied he threw a party Friday night that also caused star wide receiver Josh Gordon to miss a team walk-through and draw a suspension for the season finale in Baltimore.

Just last week, Manziel, who made two starts after replacing Brian Hoyer, promised a new approach.

Johnny Football said he means it this time.

"It's about actions," he said. "It's about being accountable and doing what I'm going to say."

The Browns have heard Manziel make similar promises in the past and are counting on him to keep his word.

"He realizes this, that at some point, talk is cheap," coach Mike Pettine said. "To me, the actions are much more important than what he says."

The 22-year-old Manziel shot down reports he hosted a party that was attended by teammates, including the troubled Gordon whom Pettine said is "squarely in a crossroads with us" because of his many missteps the past two seasons.

Manziel said he let his "guard down a little bit" and went out Friday night with friends who were visiting from Kerrville, Texas. When he was late for his treatment Saturday, the Browns sent security personnel to his home.

"It was a mistake by me," he said. "At the same time, you can sit here and say and talk and say this all you want, but when your actions don't reflect that, and you make a conscious decision to put yourself in the position that you stay out too late and not wake up the next morning, that's going to cause a lot of trouble, so I did that to myself. I brought this on myself."

Manziel acknowledges he's responsible for much of the media commotion surrounding the team.

"I don't think it's fair to anybody in this locker room the distractions I've brought at points in time," he said. "So I'm sorry to these guys that are veterans in this locker room and know what it takes, that I'm having to learn the hard way."

He added, tellingly, that he better do that, or there will be consequences.

"I'm either going to learn or I'm going to be finding something else to do," he said.

Pettine, who also suspended rookie cornerback Justin Gilbert for "multiple violations" of team rules for Sunday's game, said Manziel has no excuse for being late for treatment.

"We hold the quarterback to a higher standard than everybody else," he said. "That just comes with the territory at that position. Has his behavior been disappointing? Absolutely."

The Browns drafted Manziel in the first round with the hope he would develop into their future quarterback. But the former college star's taste for clubs and weekends in Las Vegas raised immediate questions about his commitment, and when Manziel was on the field he looked overwhelmed and unprepared.

While some Cleveland fans have called for the team to cut Manziel and Gordon, Pettine said the Browns won't do anything rash.

With Manziel's issues and Hoyer's impending free agency, the Browns enter the offseason with as many questions about the quarterback situation as ever.

"The sample size on Manziel was not very big, and on the surface not very encouraging," he said. "I would say our quarterback picture is muddy, at best."

Hoyer had the Browns in playoff contention before falling apart. He said it would be a "great scenario" to continue to play in his hometown.

"But you always want to be wanted back and that's not up to me," he said, adding he has gotten no indication from the Browns that he's part of their plans.

Pettine isn't optimistic Hoyer will return.

Manziel hopes he can be the answer and feels he made progress. First, though, he has to take things more seriously.

MHS, SIS stamp class

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

7 Marianas High School and Saipan International School continued to dominate the basketball and volleyball events in the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization.

The Lady Dolphins capped their undefeated season with a 78-67 trouncing of the Mt. Carmel School Lady Knights in the finals of the MISO Girls Basketball League last month.

MHS, which swept the elimination round to earn the top seeding, also breezed past its opponents in the final tournament to collect its fifth straight title. The Lady Dolphins scored a 27-4 win against Tinian then followed it up with a 53-32 thrashing of MCS to take the first championship berth.

SIS, meanwhile, had to dug deep from its bag of tricks to clinch a third straight crown in the boys volleyball league and in the process foiled Grace Christian Academy's title bid.

The SIS Geckos, also swept the elimination round without losing a set and breezed through their bracket to clinch a twice-to-beat edge in the finals.

The Geckos dropped a 25-23, 25-19 decision against the Eagles in their first meeting putting their title defense bid in danger.

Andrew Johnson, behind the excellent set plays of Tommy Choi, led the Geckos' attacks in the second game to clinch the title after a hard-fought 25-18, 25-18 decision against the Eagles.

JON PEREZ
Saipan International School's Andrew Johnson serves during their title match against Grace Christian Academy in the MISO volleyball league.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Marianas High School's Alexa Vergara tries to keep the ball away from Mt. Carmel Schoo's Tawnie Manibusan during their title game in the MISO caging at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

BLUE

From Page 28

team's place in CNMI soccer history.

The Blue Ayuyus' morale-boosting win rubbed off to their female counterparts, as the CNMI Women's National Team routed Macau, 7-0, the following day.

Alexa Vergara, Emily Maxberry, Gabrielle Race, Megan Silberberger, Jeraldine Castillo, and Carrie Schuler scored in the lopsided win, also a first for the CNMI women's crew in an EAFF-sanctioned tournament. Other members of the squad were Jhaneeka Atalig, Elaine Enriquez, Michelle Masga, Mikky Vargas, Marielle Gariguez, Jeralyn Castillo, Melody Johnson, Diane Pablo, Thea Minor, Elizabeth Phan, Krizelle Mae Tuazon, and Chevy Kate Alipio. Luam Khen Koo was the head coach with Wai Wo Lee and Chi Ming Tang assisting him.

These victories highlighted a very good year for Northern Mariana Islands Football Association, which continued to strengthen its grassroots and youth program for players, train local coaches and officials, and hold regular tournaments in 2014.

Jericho moves up to pro ranks

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

8 Jericho Cruz won't be able to reach his dream of playing for the Philippine Basketball Association if not for coach Joe Diaz, one of the FIBA-accredited coaches in the CNMI who slowly helped him develop his skills.

From Diaz's Rollers program, the once skinny guard trained and further honed his talent under CNMI national men's basketball team coaches Rufino Aguon and Elias Rangamar.

Cruz then chose to bring his acts to the Philippines, the birthplace of his mother, and pursue his longtime dream of making it to the PBA. He first played for a lesser-known school, Rizal Technological University—a member of a lesser-known collegiate league, the National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities.

He was one of the leading scorers for the RTU Blue Thunder and helped his team to a couple of runner-up finishes. Cruz was then spotted by former-pro-turned-collegiate-coach Leo Austria in an interscholastic basketball tournament in Bacolod City and the former's luck change.

Austria, who was then coaching Adamson University, a member of the UAAP—the Philippines most prestigious collegiate basketball league—recruited Cruz and the former CNMI national team member played for three seasons with the Falcons where he got noticed by scouts and pro coaches.

And in August this year, Cruz put the CNMI on the basketball map after being drafted ninth overall by Rain or Shine in the PBA. He's been playing impressively in the latter part of season-opening Philippine Cup before his inaugural rookie stint was cut short after suffering a fracture foot in the Elasto Painters' 100-90 win over Barangay Ginebra last Dec. 7.

He's been cheering his teammates from the sidelines as the Painters trail the Alaska Aces, 2-3, in their best-of-seven semifinals series.

KC CRUZ
Rain or Shine's Jericho Cruz drives against two Blackwater defenders during their game in the Philippine Cup.

Collegiate athletes excel

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

9 Golfer Leina Kim, football defensive tackle Savali Talalemotu and baseball player Joshua Jones made their own mark in their respective NCAA schools in 2014.

Kim, playing for NCAA Division II school and reigning Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference champions Colorado State University-Pueblo, has had a remarkable 2014-2015 fall season for the Lady Thunderwolves.

She earned her second straight RMAC Golfer of the Year honors before the season started and in the process topped four of the five tournaments in the fall season.

Talalemotu, meanwhile, is in his second year of playing for Portland State University, a Big Sky Conference member in the NCAA Division I.

The back-up defensive tackle, who suffered a minor injury in late October, had 8 tackles and 2.5 sacks while forcing a fumble in the Vikings' 13-31 loss to the Idaho State Bengals.

He's been doing light training, working out at the gym to keep in shape, and catching up with his studies during the offseason.

Jones, a many-time CNMI All-Star team member, has chosen to play for Division II school University of West Alabama among seven others which wanted to sign him up on their baseball roster.

The lefty pitcher chose to suit up for the Tigers, signing a letter of intent early this year, since he believed that Alabama would give him more opportunities of playing baseball at a higher level.

The Gary Rundles-coached West Alabama Tigers play in the Gulf South Conference and finished the 2014 regular season with a 27-18 record.

Before choosing West Alabama, Jones played for two years for Colby Community College in the National Junior College Athletics Association.

Kim

Jones

Sharks tear PH Punishers apart

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

10 The CNMI Sharks taught the Philippine Punishers a thing or two about football as the visiting squad were merciless in their second meeting last August.

The Sharks, beaten 13-6 by the Punishers the first time they met in November 2013, scored 9 touchdowns on their way to a 72-0 shutout win.

The Sharks-Punishers match was expected to be another close one after the Philippines' seven-point win last year, but with the hosts' missing most of their top players they received a mauling from the visitors.

With offensive coach Garth Backe and defensive coordinator June Failauga helping chief mentor John Blanco with the plays, the Sharks enjoyed an already insurmountable 48-0 halftime lead.

Backe and Failauga were instrumental in the Sharks' revitalized offense and impenetrable defensive formations.

Dave Ada Jr., Alex Standish, and Derrick Rangamar caught TD passes, while the Sharks' other TDs were made via running plays and defensive TDs. They also converted seven out of nine two-point conversion plays and scored 4 points on two safeties.

Jerome Norita, George Lieto Jr., Jermaine Catching, Syl Teregeyo, Butch Kaipat, Joe Ocampo, Jaime Martinez, Caesar Whitee, Glen Palacios, Zac Ruetz, Charleston Aiken, Vince Kaipat, Derick Aughenbaugh, Daniel Agulto, and Jay Tilipao completed the Sharks roster.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The CNMI Sharks players, coaches, and referees pose for a photo after whipping the Philippine Punishers in a friendly game last August.

Senior All-Stars return to World Series

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

The CNMI Senior League All-Stars ended a three-year drought after ruling the 2014 Little League Asia Pacific-Middle East Regional Tournament.

The win earned the squad a ticket to the World Series. The last time a CNMI Senior League team made it to the World Series in Bangor, Maine was in 2010.

Team CNMI scored a come-from-behind 8-6 triumph over Guam in the finals of the regional tournament held at the Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga, Philippines.

However, the CNMI All-Stars' luck ran out as they went up against stronger opponents in pool play, dropping all of their four matches in the World Series.

They suffered a 13-3 blowout defeat against host team Bangor East-West Little League in their opening game and followed it up with a 10-0 shutout loss opposite US West champions Central East Maui Little League.

Team CNMI almost scored a win but dropped a heartbreaking 6-5 decision against Canada regional titlists Kiwanis National/North Regina/Broncos Little League before closing out with a 9-1 setback against Dumfries District Little League of Virginia.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Members of the CNMI Senior All-Star Team huddle before starting a game in the 2014 Little League Asia Pacific-Middle East Regional Tournament held in the Philippines.

Junior tennis players stand out

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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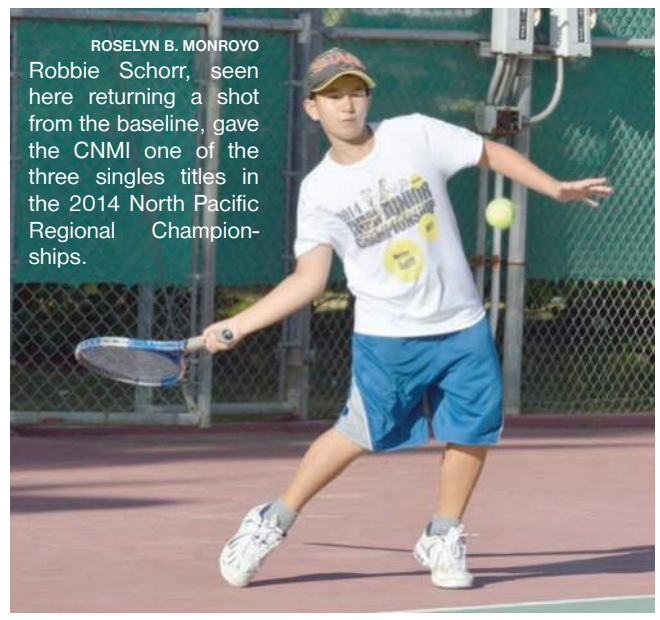
REPORTER

For the nth time, the CNMI Junior Tennis Team had another outstanding performance in the North Pacific Regional Championships.

The Commonwealth bets won three singles crown and three doubles championships in the 2014 edition of the regional competition that also featured players from Guam, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Robbie Schorr and Malika Miyawaki clinched the U12 singles titles, while Tania Tan notched the U14 crown. The three singles champions also prevailed in the doubles event, teaming up with Ken Song, Conatsu Kaga, and Julia Ishikawa, respectively.

With the CNMI's notable performance in the regional meet, 10 Commonwealth bets also earned spots on the North Pacific Team that competed in the 2014 Pacific Oceania Junior Championship in Fiji. Joining the six players above in the elite squad were Asia Raulerson, Ami Tsukagoshi, Luther Lizama, and Colin Ramsey.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Robbie Schorr, seen here returning a shot from the baseline, gave the CNMI one of the three singles titles in the 2014 North Pacific Regional Championships.

Team Marianas brings home 34 medals

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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The CNMI sent 100 athletes and officials to the 8th Micronesian Games held in July in Pohnpei and brought home 34 medals.

Team Marianas hauled 14 gold medals, 15 silvers, and five bronzes with the most medals coming from athletics. The CNMI Athletics Team, composed of Rachel Abrams, Lia Rangamar, Denise Samson, Friendly Joy Pena, Zarinae Sapong, Beo Ngirchongor, Brandon Phillip, Dylan Ackerman, Seiya Eda, Michael Mancao, Jason Lampkin, Doris Rangamar, Sylvan Rangamar, Ronald Olopai, Antonio Ichiou, Jesse James, Dan Joab and Jaynard White, delivered 15 medals.

The CNMI got 14 medals from weightlifters Raymond Santos, David Barnhouse Jr., Leo Apelo, and Salvi Villanueva, four from swimmer Victoria Chentsova, and one from paddlers Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel, James Pedro Aldan Jr., Carter Calma, Benusto Olopai, and Joshua Andrew. The Commonwealth's last two medals (silver and bronze) were courtesy of its baseball team and women's basketball squad.

Guam ruled the 8th Micronesian Games after bringing home 42 gold medals, 27 silvers, and 12 bronze, while Pohnpei (36-41-37) and Palau (36-31-38) rounded out the Top 3.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Members of the CNMI Athletics Team pose for a photo before leaving for Pohnpei to compete in the 8th Micronesian Games.

Swimmers do well in off-island tourneys

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The CNMI swimmers made good account of themselves in various off-island tournaments in 2014.

In March, Miku Tammy and Kaito Yanai competed in the the 2014 Tokyo Junior Sprints and brought home medals win them. Tammy bagged the gold medal in the girls 11's 50m butterfly race, while Yanai won a gold medal in the 100m IM and silver in the 50m breaststroke events of the boys U14 age group.

In May, Kensuke Kimura represented the CNMI in the 2014 Oceania Swimming Championships in Auckland, New Zealand, set three national records (50m, 100m, and 200 backstroke events), and clinched a bronze medal in the 200m backstroke race.

In December, three CNMI swimmers—Victoria Chentsova, Takumi Sugie, and Christian Villacrusis—joined the 12th FINA World Swimming Championships (25M) in Doha, Qatar, and all gained personal best times.

More PBTs and age group marks were also registered in 2014.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Kensuke Kimura, seen here joining a local race, won a bronze medal in the 200m backstroke event in the 2014 Oceania Swimming Championships in Auckland, New Zealand.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Pacific Games Council executive director Andrew Minogue, seen here posing with the PGC banner, visited Saipan in May to check the facilities for the 2021 Pacific Mini Games.

CNMI to host 2021 Mini Games

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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The CNMI was awarded the hosting rights for the 2021 Pacific Mini Games in 2014.

The Commonwealth is offering 12 sports when it brings the quadrennial tournament to Saipan for the first time. The list includes athletics, badminton, golf, tennis, canoe racing, volleyball (indoor and beach), baseball, sailing, swimming, triathlon, weightlifting, and wrestling.

Northern Marianas Sports Association, which represented the CNMI in submitting the bid to the Pacific Games Council, estimated the cost of hosting the Games at $1,160,000. Of the over $1-million budget for the Games, $650,000 will come from participation fees from the 22 nations, $250,000 from the government, and the remaining $260,000 from the private sector through sponsorships.

The improved Oleai Sports Complex will be the main hub of the Games, while Marianas High School and Hopwood Junior High School are proposed to house visiting athletes and officials.

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GUAM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
Members of the CNMI Men's National Team celebrate after Kirk Schuler, fourth from left, scored the go-ahead goal in their 2-1 win over Macau in the 2015 EAFF East Asian Cup at the Guam Football Association Training Centre in Harmon in July.

Blue Ayuyus make history

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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Fists pumped, arms raised, players hugged, and supporters cheered.

These celebrations happened on July 23 when the CNMI Men's National Team beat Macau, 2-1, in the Preliminary Round 1 of the 2015 EAFF East Asian Cup in Guam for the Blue Ayuyus historic first win in an international competition.

With this achievement, the Blue Ayuyus headed the list of Top 10 stories in CNMI sports in 2014.

Making history happen for the Blue Ayuyus were Nick Swaim and Kirk Schuler, who scored the two goals in the CNMI's victory over the tough Macau aside. Completing the squad were Johann Noetzel, Ethan Dickinson, Trey Dunn, Joe Miler, John Taisacan, Jonathan Takano, Jireh Yobech, Joel Fruit, Daniel Agulto, Sean Perez, Ruselle Zapanta, Jehn Joyner, Kennedy Izuka, Lucas Knecht, Bo Barry, and Dae Won Jeon. Kiyoshi Sekiguchi coached the team and was assisted by Taketomo Suzuki and Hon Kit Cheng.

TOP STORIES of 2014

Swaim scored off a corner kick in the first half to equalize, while Schuler made the dagger in the 65th minute, converting a running header that caught Macau's defense off guard. The Blue Ayuyus then played the longest 27 minutes of their lives and hung in there with Noetzel making several saves and his teammates also stepping up on defense to seal the

See BLUE on Page 26

GUAM FOOTBALL ASSSOCIATION
The starting 11 for the CNMI Men's National Team pose for a photo before facing Macau.